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MCC to vote again on whether to admit women

Vivek Chaudhary on hopes for change

THE MCC, the stubborn all-male pillar of the cricketing establishment, is to vote once again on one of the most contentious issues in its 211-year history — whether women should be allowed to become members.

The club's 17,500 members, average age 57, are to vote on the issue on September 28 after a Mori survey found that this time around, the relatively progressive wing of the MCC could outvote the dinosaurs by two-thirds and allow women to join its ranks.

In February, members voted 6,969 to 5,533 in favour of admitting women — short of the two-thirds majority needed for change.

Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie, president of the MCC and a supporter of women members, said yesterday: "It is clear from the Mori survey that a substantial majority voted against [women members] because they did not fully appreciate what the impact of women membership would be."

"There are certain members who have assumed that this is a male-only club. It was not founded as this but as a cricket club, and we are keen to see that cricket involves both genders."

He added: "The World Cup here next year will bring immense focus on Lord's and the MCC. We do not want this issue left unresolved when the eyes of the world are upon us."

"Around the world women are admitted to the great cricket clubs. We are



Gentlemen only... MCC members watching a match at Lord's from the exclusive Long Room

PHOTOGRAPH: ROGER HUTCHINGS

For

Membership views in favour of women becoming members:

□ In the world of 1998 it is wrong to have an all-male club.

□ Women love and participate in cricket, and should therefore have access to MCC membership.

□ The MCC's role and influence in the development of the game is being undermined by its all-male status.

approaching the new millennium and we live in a progressive country. I think the introduction of women will greatly enhance the MCC."

The MCC denied yesterday that it was holding a

Against

Membership views against women becoming members:

□ The MCC was created as an all-male club and no compelling case has been made for change.

□ The argument for change has appeared to rest on political correctness.

□ The overcrowding of Lord's, and of the waiting list, would be worsened by the change.

vote because of political correctness or pressure from the Government.

Soon after February's vote, Tony Banks, the sports minister, called for an immediate new ballot. A £4.5 million lottery grant

for rebuilding was also refused by the Sports Council because of the women members issue.

While political correctness may not be behind the committee's desire to admit women, financial and legal considerations certainly are. New legislation on sexual discrimination and equal access to facilities could see the MCC face prosecution if it persists with excluding women.

Anthony Wreford, chairman of the working party looking into women membership, said the MCC was having difficulty finding sponsors because of its refusal to admit women.

Mr Wreford said two large companies had pulled out of sponsorship deals because of the issue. Karen Smithies, England

women's cricket captain, said: "It is their prerogative to make the rules in their own establishment but having another vote shows they want to come into the 21st century, and I give credit to them."

A document is being sent to members outlining the arguments for supporting women members and how the process would work if they were to be admitted. If a two-thirds majority is secured, up to 10 women will be chosen as honorary members within the first year.

A women's MCC team will also be set up, playing 10 games a season against Oxbridge sides, public schools and touring teams. As in the case of men, they will have to win a percentage of matches and perform well before they are made full members.

Women who want to join through the conventional waiting list, standing at 9,500, will probably have to wait 18 years. Like other potential members, they will need four members to support their application.

Graduates spurn teaching

John Carvel
Education Editor

A COLLAPSE in the number of graduates signing up to train as secondary school teachers is threatening to play havoc with ministers' plans for raising standards of education, head teachers' leaders warned last night.

In spite of a high-profile publicity campaign to attract more people into the profession, the recruitment of trainee teachers specialising in maths is 60 per cent below the Government's target, and there is a shortage of graduates for every subject except history and PE.

"The numbers for maths are the worst since the mid-1980s and the rock-bottom numbers for physics could well make it an extreme minority subject in the not too distant future," said David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers.

He said the Government's public sector pay policy restricting salary increases to 2.5 per cent over the next year would intensify the crisis. Without a pay settlement of at least 5 per cent, schools might not be able to recruit teachers of the right quality and in the right quantity.

The warning was based on statistics from the Graduate Teacher Training Registry showing that numbers accepted for the one-year postgraduate course for secondary teaching are 13 per cent lower than at the same time last year — and well below targets set by the Department for Education and Employment.

Although 15,866 applied for postgraduate courses (7 per cent down on last year), only 11,232 had been accepted by the end of last week. Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, said the figures were unlikely to rise significantly before courses start next month.

Only 680 graduates have accepted places to train as maths teachers — down from 960 at the same time last year and 60 per cent below the government target for this year.

Another 1,628 graduates accepted places for the sciences — 40 per cent below the official target. They include 150 for physics (down 39 per cent on last year), 304 for chemistry (down 21 per cent), and 713 for biology (down 16 per cent).

Other subjects with serious shortages include design and technology (65 per cent below target), information technology (52 per cent), modern languages (36 per cent), geography (32 per cent), music and religious education (both 27 per cent), art (16 per cent), and English (13 per cent).

The register showed a 5 per cent increase in graduates accepted to train as primary teachers. The 5,680 acceptances were 28 per cent above the Government's target. But Tessa is not yet able to give figures for those accepted for the undergraduate teaching course that produces most primary teachers.

The Government is to publish a green paper on teachers' pay this year, including proposals for performance-related pay. Ministers think the current starting salary is competitive, but most teachers get stuck on about £22,000 unless they take on management responsibilities.

A spokesman for the Education Department said the Government was concerned about the numbers starting courses in maths and science.

The green paper would be the first fundamental look for many years at teaching as a profession. "It will recognise recruitment problems as a significant issue, but will also look at issues relating to pay and the recruitment, retention and motivation of teachers," he said.

Buried alive for love of mother

Son of ex-record-holder plans underground marathon attempt

Martin Wainwright

GOFF Smith will leave the world, his wife and three children behind this weekend, as he clambers down a hole in a pub garden to honour the memory of his mother.

Regulars at the Railway Inn, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, will shut the former part-time barman in a box and shovel six feet of earth on the lid, as his marathon final tribute gets under way.

"She would be thrilled," said Mr Smith, aged 37, whose mother, Emma, spent 13 years as the world record-holder for being buried alive. She was

shattered when an American smashed her 101-day stint underground at a Skegness funfair in 1968, by enduring 141 days in a transatlantic tomb.

Mrs Smith killed herself two years ago with the record still in the United States, after a wild, 72-year life, particularly for a former nun. Although she declined an offer to live in a glass coffin in a shark-filled pool, she made regular headlines by stunts such as offering sex to striking car workers whose wives had adopted Lysistrata tactics to get them back to work.

"She was in it to break a record, any record," said Mr Smith, who is unemployed

apart from occasional bar shifts. "But I am doing it as a tribute to her. I have been psyching myself up for two years and now I am ready to go."

Mr Smith ducked a previous deadline, when he announced he would be buried in April last year, but promised yesterday that the final countdown had begun for his pub attempt. The 7ft wooden box with a TV and a lavatory hatch, modelled on his mother's arrangements, is in position and a feeding tube ready to be screwed in place.

Mr Smith's den is designed to have lighting, with the TV capable of receiving all satellite and terrestrial channels via an extended aerial and dish. His mother's set was closed-circuit, chiefly because she wanted to play bingo every night to fend off

boredom. Organisers of the project have not gone into detail about the underground lavatory, but temporary versions of a septic tank have been used by other prisoners. Books and other diversions can also be lowered through Mr Smith's feeding tube. He said he would be able to accept Christmas presents — "though only very small ones."

Although a moving gesture, the record burial attempt has come too late for competitive recognition, because the Guinness Book of Records no longer recognises the stunt on longer grounds. Mr Smith is also unlikely to attract the impressive following of his mother, a miner's wife, whose face was examined down a peep-hole by 60,000 sightseers at a shilling (5p) a time.

Rouble plunges in leaderless Russia

continued from page 1

stormed in to flush out the remnants of an attempt to resist the president's illegal dissolution of parliament. Now, seven years after Mr Yeltsin's triumphant defeat of Soviet reactionaries and five years after his attempt to impose liberal economic reform down the barrel of a T-72 tank, it is here that his rule is winding to a confused, inglorious end. There are no tanks this time, just increasing secession from the mad economy he has helped create.

A lone security guard kept watch on the office of the man to whom Mr Yeltsin desperately turned to save Russia from a bottomless financial crash: Mr Chernomyrdin, who was sacked in March.

The brief air of optimism over his re-appointment generated by the media yesterday morning — all three main television channels are now in effect controlled by the government and its business backers — was blown away by a disastrous day on the currency markets.

As MPs in the Duma savoured their new-found leverage over a prime minister designate who has promised a coalition government, staff in the parliament building near the Kremlin were in panic. Last night an anxious Mr Chernomyrdin signed an instruction agreeing the new terms on which foreign loans would be repaid and warned the Duma there were days.

What seems in prospect is a bizarre coalition between the Communists and the oligarchic New Russian capitalists.

rather than weeks, in which to take decisions. "It may happen that the authorities are obliged to take the harshest possible measures," he said, without elaborating.

Boris Nemtsov, a minister in the previous government who resigned in anger, said yesterday that it would be impossible to say in which direc-

tion Mr Chernomyrdin plans to move until he unveils his cabinet, and he refuses to do so until he is confirmed by parliament. It sounds like a recipe for political paralysis — which is exactly what Russia does not need in the midst of a financial crisis.

Mr Nemtsov said a Communist-dominated government would be worse than the existing oligarchic economy. "I

garchic New Russian capitalists led by Mr Chernomyrdin, in the name of saving Russia. This would be a terrible wound to Mr Yeltsin. For it is exactly what was proposed by the president's disgraced former bodyguard, Alexander Korzhakov, and the tycoon Boris Berezovsky when they attempted to have the 1996 presidential elections cancelled.

It might seem a blow to Russia's liberal minority but they, too, are divided. Olga Bekinskaite, an MP from the same liberal breeding ground of Nizhny Novgorod as Mr Nemtsov and Sergei Kiriyenko, the prime minister sacked on Sunday, said: "Maybe a popular-oligarchic alliance would be the best thing. Our Communists are also businessmen — those in the Duma, at least."

"Doesn't it seem like this is paying the West back for 10 years of telling us that we needed to have a completely free market in this country? When you have a free market, you get a free crisis."

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Islamic activists decry end of traditional tolerance to dissidents as 'hysterical reaction' □ Sinn Fein condemns it as form of internment

Muslims who find a haven in London

THE GROUPS/ How Muslim fundamentalists find freedom to rally political support in London's suburbs

Luke Harding

BRIAIN has become an international centre for Islamic activists, with London the home to a bewildering variety of Islamic fundamentalist movements, many of whom make no secret of their passion for violence to achieve their revolutionary goals.

There are several reasons for this: Britain's honourable tradition of tolerance to dissidents; flexible asylum laws that can be exploited; a colonial past which has given Britain a large Muslim community to whom the dissidents can preach; and a burgeoning overseas student population.

Well before Tony Blair's announcement yesterday, the Home Office had contemplated introducing a specific offence in Britain of conspiring to commit terrorist offences outside the UK. Last November Jack Straw promised to bring in a new law following the terrorist attack on tourists in Luxor in Egypt. Legislation was not expected, however, until next year.

There is no doubt that Islamic groups use London to support terrorist movements in their homelands, either through political campaigning or raising funds. Security chiefs in Israel and France also hint that some terrorist operations have been plotted from Britain. This has long been the complaint of govern-

ments in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Other experts disagree. "Several of these so-called groups are simply one guy and a fax machine," one source said last night. "They can be very shambolic. Some of them are little more than hazy groups. It will be very difficult to find hard evidence of terrorist activity."

Among the groups are: al-Muhajiroun, Omar Bakri Mohamed, the leader of al-Muhajiroun — The Emigrants — yesterday condemned the new law. "Any Muslim should be able to fight to liberate their homeland from an occupying force such as freedom fighters against Israel, or against US troops occupying the Middle East."

"I fear this new law will target these people. I fear any Muslim trying to liberate their homeland from an occupying force will now be called a terrorist."

Bakri operates out of an un-



Farid Kassim, leader of the Islamic Liberation Party

assuming office in Edmonton. His group is said to be the fastest growing militant Islamic organisation in the world. Bakri has expressed support for Hamas, the Palestinian terrorist organisation with a lethal reputation for suicide bombing, and



Omar Bakri Mohamed, leader of al-Muhajiroun

recently said he "applauded" the bombing of the US embassies in East Africa.

He wants to see the establishment of a khilafah — an Islamic state — in Britain. He also wants the overthrow of Western society. Bakri is a past associate of Sheikh Omar

Abdel-Rahman, the Blind Sheikh jailed for the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing in New York.

Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights in Saudi Arabia

Among Bakri's admirers is Mohamed al-Masari, the Saudi dissident who fought off Home Office attempts to deport him to Dominica two years ago. He yesterday described the new law as a "hysterical reaction".

Al-Masari has called for the annihilation of the Jews and supports the fatwa on the novelist Salman Rushdie. He works from a suburban office in Brondesbury, north London, where his organisation, the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights in Saudi Arabia, campaigns to overthrow the Saudi monarchy.

Islamic Observation Centre Based in Maida Vale, this group is run by an Egyptian, Ali al-Sirri. He has links to the Muslim Brotherhood, and

has applied for political asylum. His name figures on Egypt's most wanted list.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Islamic Liberation Party)

Another extreme British Muslim organisation which has its base in Tottenham is Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HUT) — the Islamic Liberation Party — which campaigns for the establishment of a Muslim regime in Britain. HUT is now regarded as far less militant than it once was. The mainly student body — led by Farid Kassim — is part of an international movement of the same name that is banned throughout the Arab world.

Front Islamique de Salvation

The dissident groups are united by their hatred of established Arab regimes, particularly those in Algeria and Egypt. Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front, a banned political party, continues to operate in Britain and publishes a newsletter from a PO Box

number in Southall. Its armed wing, the Islamic Salvation Army, has been responsible for a string of terrorist attacks in Algeria.

Filisteen al-Musluma

Israeli security sources have also put pressure on Britain to hear down on Hamas, which they believe has its educational headquarters in London. The Hamas monthly magazine, Filisteen al-Musluma (Islamic Palestine), is published from the unlikely centre of leafy Cricklewood, north London, where its charities also operate freely.

Al-Ansar al-Shariah

It is not hard to see why London has become the epicentre of long-distance Islamic revolution. Abu Hamzah al-Masri, who runs an organisation called Al-Ansar al-Shariah which supports Algerian and Egyptian terrorist groups, puts it like this: "The British know how to leave you some space."

Speech to be included in new law on conspiracy

ANALYSIS/ Measure will run into problem of obtaining proof abroad

Richard Norton-Taylor

TWO specific measures will be tabled by the Government next week strengthening Britain's existing anti-terrorist legislation.

Conviction for belonging to a proscribed organisation on the evidence of a senior police officer.

This would significantly lessen the burden of proof needed to secure a conviction for membership of illegal organisations which will include the Real IRA, the group responsible for the Omagh bombing. The measure also amounts to a new restriction of the right to silence.

Refusal by a suspect to mention something later relied on as a defence, or refusal to answer any relevant question during interrogation or later, or a refusal to co-operate with any relevant inquiry, would be regarded as corroboration of the police officer's evidence.

In effect, a suspect could be convicted on the evidence alone of a senior police officer. The proposed change in the law reflects those proposed by the Irish government.

For the first time it will be an offence in Britain to conspire to commit terrorist offences abroad.

This radical departure is fraught with difficulties, so much so that the Government had put off proposals it originally planned to announce in a consultation paper — not even as a bill — last January.

The Government was concerned about widespread cross-party opposition to a similar measure in a private member's bill backed by its Conservative predecessor but which fell in early 1997 as a result of lack of parliamentary time and the incompetence of government whips.

At present the criminal law extends only to murder or conspiring to commit murder, in certain designated, mainly European, countries, and to the possession of items, such

as explosives, connected with the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism "here or overseas".

The Government is planning to extend the notoriously difficult concept of conspiracy to cover speech and written material — possibly including the content of faxes and other communications with foreign countries — as well as the funding in Britain of terrorist groups abroad.

The problem is not only one of defining terrorism, but of obtaining evidence and proof. Many countries — notably Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia — which have persistently accused Britain of harbouring terrorists — have been unable to come up with evidence usable in a British court. Prosecutors may have to rely on evidence provided by foreign governments with different political and legal systems.

During the debates on the Jurisdiction (Conspiracy and Incitement) Bill in 1997, Alan Michael, now a Home Office minister, warned that it could be abused and hit "unintended targets". The Government might include a possible safeguard giving the Attorney-General the final say in politically sensitive cases.

The new law is likely to say that it would be an offence to incite or conspire to activities in foreign countries which would be both unlawful if committed there and unlawful if carried out in Britain — a so-called "dual criminality" test. Yet that, too, suggests a parity between British law and the law of other countries.

The new measure will be welcomed by MI5 and by the Foreign Office and is likely to make it easier for courts to deport non-British subjects convicted under the new law. The 1997 bill was prompted in particular by the activities of Mohammed al Masari, the Saudi dissident opposed to the Saudi monarchy.

Other possible proposals: • Allowing the product of telephone taps to be used as evidence.

• Making it easier to use the evidence of informers.

• Making it an offence to "direct" an illegal organisation. This would be aimed at individuals against whom there is no first-hand evidence or who admit membership of political groups but deny links with associated paramilitary groups.



The scene in Omagh following the car bomb this month which killed 28: Tony Blair announced the new anti-terrorist laws during a visit to the town yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL MCBRIDE

Too little say Unionists, too tough says Sinn Fein

REACTION/ 'Draconian' moves leave both sides dissatisfied

John Mullan
Ireland Correspondent

SINN Fein is appalled, dubbing it "draconian" under another guise: civil rights lawyers fear miscarriages of justice are inevitable; and Willie Thompson, Ulster Unionist MP for West Tyrone, says it is "too little, too late".

The Government's bill, primarily to crush the Real IRA, is uncompromising stuff, and that is before the full package of anti-terrorist measures is finalised. The Government is still considering proposals from Ronnie Finagran, RUC Chief Constable. Two measures, though, will definitely form part of the legislation.

The word of a senior police officer will be admissible to secure the conviction of a suspected member of a proscribed organisation.

Corroboration will come from an inference of guilt that can be drawn from a suspect's failure to co-operate.

There is no jury safeguard.

Membership is dealt with in the so-called Diplock court, with a judge sitting alone.

Although the Real IRA is the main target, it is inconceivable that the legislation will formally omit the mainstream paramilitaries, even though they are on ceasefire. That sparked Sinn Fein fury.

The Government had to act, particularly when the Irish government last week unveiled its "draconian" measures. Dublin drew on many of the toughest elements of UK anti-terrorist legislation.

Bertie Ahern, the taoiseach, went further, with the proposal to allow police testimony to secure membership convictions, and that forced Mr Blair's hand. He had to do so, otherwise suspects liable to conviction in the Irish Republic would simply skip across the border.

The measures will mean, for the first time, similar approaches throughout the island. The one exception is internment, removed from the UK statute books this year. But, although it is pos-

sible in the Irish Republic, it has never been used during the Troubles.

The Real IRA is based in the Irish Republic. That means, unless its leaders escape special branch surveillance and jurisdiction, it will fall to the Garda to make the first arrests.

Mitchel McLaughlin, Sinn Fein chairman, said: "The result of such repressive legislation has historically been the routine violation of human and civil rights."

Given the history of the RUC, it would be an act of extreme folly to give that force additional repressive powers.

Mr Thompson, whose constituency includes Omagh, said: "It is still not a good enough way of dealing with the problem of terrorists."

He wanted internment restored. West Tyrone's Democratic Unionist Party assemblyman, Oliver Gibson, whose niece was killed in Omagh this month, said he did not believe the two governments had the political will to heat the terrorists.

He said: "The greatest gift the victims of Omagh could have is good order and a peaceful life. To get that you must have effective action."

'Government has learnt nothing from history'

HUMAN RIGHTS/ Policing failures led to violations

Jamie Wilson
and Vikram Dodd

HUMAN rights groups were last night united in their condemnation of the new legislation proposed by Tony Blair.

A spokesman for the civil rights group Liberty said: "The Government seems to have learnt nothing from the history of anti-terrorism laws which have rarely been effective and have often led to the wrong people being accused and convicted. These measures are more likely to increase support for extremist organisations and reduce respect for the rule of law."

Julia Hall of the international Human Rights Watch was equally damning. "We are all revolted by what happened at Omagh, but this type of repressive legislation can't be the answer to providing justice for the victims. The Government and parties to the Good Friday Agreement agreed there was a need for fundamental change to policing."

He said: "We believe the new policing commission in the North was established in part based on a series of human rights violations by the RUC over the past 30 years. To now give them additional extraordinary powers to arrest persons suspected of political violence when we know in the past that these types of laws have had a disproportionate impact on nationalists, seriously undermines the agreement."

Sean O'Callaghan, a former IRA member, said terrorist groups in Ulster would find ways of frustrating the planned new law.

He said: "When questioned you can say: 'I'm not a member of the group you are accusing me of belonging to, and I will say nothing more.' That is the tactic they will use."

Veteran Labour MP Tony Benn was also scathing in his analysis of the new legislation. "The peace process in Northern Ireland is the thing that has really brought terrorism to an end, the tremendous opposition to vio-

lence. That is the most powerful weapon against terror."

"If you look at Britain's reaction to the Ireland problem, of the years from occupied partition, direct rule, internment, and many other measures, none of them solved the problem. It began to change only with genuine all party talks, which included Sinn Fein."

"If you imagine you can deal with the problem with legislation of the most draconian kind, then the danger is that it runs against the tide of opposition that wants the peace process."

Mr Benn warned that rushing legislation through Parliament could lead to mistakes being made that would be regretted later.

Nick Hardwick, director of the Refugee Council, said he wanted to see the details of the new proposals: "We share the horror at the recent bombings and would support measures to stop them."

"The question is how you define what is terrorist and what does conspiracy involve in practice."

"The question is where the line is drawn between opposition to oppressive regimes and terrorist acts."

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Gifted boy loses case for study aid

Rory Carroll

A 15-YEAR-OLD dyslexic boy who has been accepted at Cambridge University may lose his court battle against his local council.

Following Portsmouth city council's refusal to aid his studies, Alexander Faludy, whose high IQ is off the normal scale, will have to look for corporate sponsorship before taking his place next month at Peterhouse College to read theology and history of art.

Mr Justice Tucker at the High Court said the council was correct in refusing to assess Alexander for special needs, even though he can

write only two illegible words a minute and needs special equipment to read and write. He also suffers from dyspraxia, the so-called clumsy child syndrome.

Samantha Chambers, solicitor for the Faludy family, said the decision was disappointing. "It would be very sad if, after overcoming his significant learning difficulties, his place at Cambridge could be threatened by lack of finances."

Alexander's parents, Tanya and Andrew, who are schoolteachers, need to raise between £5,000 and £10,000 a year for the three-year course, to cover tuition, equipment and a helper. The only financial help they have received is a £450 annual maintenance grant.

Refusing leave to appeal,

the judge said the council's decision could not be impugned on grounds of unlawfulness, illogicality or unreasonableness. He said the reason the teenager had gone to court was that his intellectual gifts could not wholly overcome his difficulties.

Judge Tucker said the boy's parents had tried to give him the best possible education. "They have done all in their power to achieve this. They have borne the full expense of his education."

The council refused to top up Alexander's university grant because it added pupils from local authority schools only, whereas Alexander attended Milton Abbey, a private, boarding school in Dorset.

His parents had recognised his ability when, aged three, he recited verbatim the story of Thomas the Tank Engine that he had just heard on tape. At five he analysed Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, at eight he dictated an analysis of Othello, and at nine he became the youngest person to pass GCSE English.

The British Dyslexic Association said there was a moral case for support to be made available to Alexander and others like him. Joanna Rule, the association's chief executive, said: "Alexander is exceptional, a truly gifted child."

"But there are many other dyslexic children whose ordinary school careers are equally unhappy, stuck in lower-stream groups regardless of their ability, and afraid of being bullied."

"The Government must signal its determination that schools have higher expectations of pupils with special educational needs by setting targets for their performance."



Alexander Faludy and his mother, Tanya, leaving the High Court yesterday after losing their case. PHOTOGRAPH: JACK HILL



Francesca Quintyne recovering in hospital after Horrett Campbell's attack at her school in July 1996

Tories deride NHS waiting list cut

David Bradie, Social Services Correspondent

THE Conservatives last night sought to spoil the expected announcement today of a fall in hospital waiting lists by claiming the figures had been fiddled and producing evidence of alleged denied treatment.

Labour's rapid-rebuttal machine swung into action, casting doubt on some of the case studies cited and suggesting that the "fiddles" had been started by the Tory government.

In response to a five-page dossier issued by the Tories, entitled *Who's Hurting Now?*, Labour issued a seven-page document in the name of Frank Dobson, Health Secretary, entitled *Who's Desperate Now?* Mr Dobson has announced that today's waiting list figures, for the end of June, will show a fall from the record of almost 1.3 million people in England waiting for operations at the end of March. The list has continued to rise since the general election, despite an "early pledge" by Labour to cut it by 100,000.

Philip Hammond, a Tory health spokesman, last night maintained that the figures had been "fiddled to manipulate a fall". Patients had been kicked off the list by "administrative ruses" and distortion of clinical priorities so that complex cases had been deferred.

"What is going on is a disgrace and I hope that Mr Dobson will join us in condemning these practices instead of attempting to claim credit for a fall in the waiting lists which is bogus," Mr Hammond said.

The Tories say ruses include lengthening the waits for out-patient consultation, so cases take longer to get on to the treatment list; limiting availability of certain treatments on the NHS; and taking administrative action to remove people from the list, often giving them little time to say if they still wish to be treated.

Cases highlighted include a 73-year-old woman from Bedford, allegedly told she would have to wait three years for an operation on varicose veins even though they were already going septic and would, according to her GP, cause a leg ulcer. The woman is said to have spent £2,300 of her savings on a private operation.

Labour says that there are no traceable records of the woman having been on a waiting list, or indeed having been referred for surgery, but that she did have a private operation under the last government.

The party's rejoinder says that validation of local waiting lists, by asking patients if they still wish to be treated, was started by the Tories in 1991.

Labour says that the NHS is "doing nothing today that it hadn't been asked to do for years by the Tories".

Opera orchestra faces axe

Arts Council plan to save costs may lead to sack for 90 musicians

Dan Glaister Arts Correspondent

THE Royal Opera House could dismiss its orchestra of some 90 musicians and its chorus of almost 50 singers should it agree to proposals being prepared by the Arts Council.

The plan would embroil the troubled ROH in further controversy as it prepares for its reopening in a year's time. The prospect of further redundancies would almost certainly provoke an industrial dispute. It emerged this week that the reopening of the £215.5 million redevelopment could be delayed by a month because of problems with the construction of a fly tower.

The plan to remove the

ROH's permanent orchestra would see the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra engaged on a performance by performance basis. Similarly, singers would be hired for individual performances or seasons. The merits of the scheme are that it would reduce costs. It would also serve the Arts Council, which gives the ROH an annual subsidy of £300,000.

With most observers agreeing that there are too many orchestras in London, the switch would provide the ROH with a reliable source of work and income.

But critics of the plan fear that by sacrificing the permanent orchestra and chorus, the artistic reputation of the ROH would be endangered. A similar scheme promoted by the Scottish Arts Council to

merge the orchestras of Scottish Opera and Scottish Ballet was rejected after protests from the Musicians' Union and other interested parties.

The Arts Council said that it had not officially approached the ROH, and stressed that it was in negotiations with the ROH.

It has also emerged that the ROH has been offered £15 million in increased subsidy. This is in response to the Byre report, which suggested that the ROH needed extra funding to function properly, and to entreaties from Sir Colin Southgate, chairman of the ROH. Sir Colin had asked for £15 million in additional subsidy.

The ROH currently receives £14.4 million in subsidy from the Arts Council for its two resident companies, the Royal Ballet and the Royal Opera. It also received £7.5 million from the National Lottery towards its redevelopment.

£7,950 award to machete girl 'derisory'

Luke Harding

THE Home Secretary, Jack Straw, was urged last night to intervene in the case of a girl aged six awarded £7,950 compensation for being scarred for life in a machete attack.

Francesca Quintyne was attacked at a teddy bears' picnic at school two years ago. Her solicitor, Tom Jones, yesterday described as "nasty" the new tariff from which her compensation was calculated.

He said Labour had opposed it when in opposition.

The girl was one of three children hacked about the face with a 2ft machete by a paranoid schizophrenic, Hor-

rett Campbell, who ran amok at St Luke's school in Wolverhampton, West Midlands. She was left with a sin wound in her cheek and a smashed jaw.

Dennis Turner, the Labour MP whose Wolverhampton constituency includes the school, yesterday described the award as derisory. "I'm quite sure that Mr Straw would be prepared to look at this case. He is a very fair-minded chap," he said. There seemed to be a worrying disparity between the amounts awarded in civil injury cases and those in common criminal injury cases.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board awarded Francesca £7,950 for "serious facial disfigurement", plus



Lisa Potts... "what about the girl's mental scars?"

£300 for "fractured jaw bones" and £150 for "significant head scarring". Her mother was said to be stunned by the amount. It was calculated using a tariff introduced three years ago. Previously compensation was based on common law and allowed discretion. The board yesterday said the parents could ask for her

case to be reviewed and could go to an appeal panel. But the award would be increased only if the panel was convinced the girl had suffered lasting psychiatric damage — a highly unlikely outcome.

Ed McKeown, the board's operations manager, said the award scheme had been approved by Parliament, "and it is not for us to say whether it is satisfactory".

Lisa Potts, the former nursery nurse who tried to shield Francesca during the attack, said she was disgusted. "She will be scarred physically for life, but who can tell what mental scars she will also carry?"

Mr Jones, a partner in Thompsons, solicitors for personal injury cases, called on the home affairs select committee to look again at criminal injuries compensation.

A Home Office spokesman said Britain's criminal injuries compensation was the most generous in the world, giving out £200 million a year. "I'm not aware of any plans for the system to be changed, but these things are always under review," he added.

100-second hearing ends footballer Gascoigne's eventful marriage

Rory Carroll

THE closing chapter in Paul Gascoigne's tempestuous marriage was given a twist yesterday when Sheryl, his wife, said divorce had come too late to prevent her having health problems from enduring two years of his behaviour.

She was granted a decree

nisi in the High Court on the grounds of the footballer's unreasonable behaviour, although she reserved the right to reveal at a future date whatever details of their marriage have not already been splashed in *Hell* or tabloid newspapers.

Mr Gascoigne, notorious for his wife-beating and drinking, was said to have felt betrayed this month when

Glen Hoddle, the England coach, published an account of an alleged tantrum on the eve of the World Cup.

Barring an appeal from either party or any member of the public who can prove an interest, the decree will be absolute in six weeks.

Neither was present for the hearing, which lasted 100 seconds, but in a signed statement Mrs Gascoigne, aged 33,

told Senior District Judge Gerald Angel that the problems which led her to demand a divorce were continuing.

The statement said: "I consider that Paul's behaviour has affected my health. I reserve the right to give further details should this become necessary in due course."

The only people present in Court 17 of the Principal Reg-

istry of the Family Division, central London, were the judge, his clerk and nine journalists. Judge Angel also issued decrees nisi to the Prince and Princess of Wales and the Duke and Duchess of York.

A lengthy legal battle is expected over the financial settlement. Mr Gascoigne, aged 31, is said to be worth £5 million.



Paul Gascoigne with his wife Sheryl, who claims violence and drinking affected her health

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تكنولوجيا المعلومات

Rare tree species teeter on edge of extinction

Human activity is destroying hundreds of types around the world, including some unique to Britain which cling to remote cliff faces, writes Paul Brown

HUNDREDS of tree species worldwide are in danger of being wiped out by man, including 11 which are unique to Britain, according to a report published in Geneva yesterday.

Forest fires and logging are the main factors internationally, but in the UK overgrazing by sheep and quarrying of stone have brought some species to the edge of extinction.

The rarest British tree, Ley's Whitebeam, has been reduced to 15 in number, and clings to two cliff edges in Powys. The tree is one of 11 species with the Latin name

Sorbus which is unique to the British Isles. All of them are in danger of extinction. Ley's Whitebeam is classed as "critically endangered" by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge, and is in the top 10 of trees most likely to disappear.

The worldwide list was presented to the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests in Geneva yesterday in an attempt to get governments to take the fate of hundreds of threatened tree species seriously.

Sarah Oldfield, one of the co-authors of the report, said: "One species was reduced to a stump in a paddy field in China. I think we might be able to clone one and keep it

as a curiosity in a botanical garden but for all practical purposes it is extinct.

"But for many others, although their position is precarious, remedial action can be taken. We can remove the threats and can save them if we have the political will."

Each country attending the Geneva conference will be presented with a list of its trees in danger and asked to take action to save them before they join the list of 77 classed as already extinct.

Two other *Sorbus* on the critical list are the Welsh Whitebeam, of which there were 44 at the last count, and *Sorbus wilsoniana*, which clings to life on the cliffs of

the Avon gorge in Somerset. Some specimens of this tree, so rare it has never acquired an English name, have recently been dug up and stolen, so the figure of 20 left

'One species was reduced to a stump in a paddy field in China'

in existence is a best guess. None of the *Sorbus* could ever be called common because they tend to have adapted to small niches up cliffs, but

many of the trees which are natives of the tropics were once numbered in hundreds of thousands.

A total of 976 of the world's 100,000 known species are on the critically endangered list. Another 1,319 are classed as endangered and 3,609 as vulnerable.

Apart from the stump in China, some other types have only one known healthy mature specimen left, although seeds or saplings may survive. Mauritius's *Diospyros angulata*, for example, was said to be down to one single female tree but it unexpectedly bore fruit in 1996 and 1997, suggesting there is a male of the species some-

where in the vicinity. No one has found it.

But not all trees reproduce sexually — some use branches touching the ground or extended roots to clone

'We can remove the threats and save them if we have political will'

themselves. The critically endangered British trees, all of the same *Sorbus* group, have the unique methods of spreading seeds which are identical

clones to the mother plant. One other of the same type, the *Sorbus bristolensis*, is classed in the second category, endangered, because there are 100 of them. This also lives in the Avon Gorge and spreads by seed cloning.

Six other British trees come into the "vulnerable" category with their numbers measured in hundreds. Since all have been located, measured, and have their habitats protected all have a good chance of survival.

The prospects are worse for many others. Logging and wholesale clearing of forests for farmland threaten many species. Malaysia has the most critically endangered

species with 197. Indonesia, recently ravaged by forest fires, has 123. India 48 and Brazil, the most heavily forested country on the planet, has 38.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), which campaigns for each country to declare 10 per cent of its forest cover protected by the year 2000, says if we cannot protect trees then there is little hope for other creatures. Some studies have found that up to 300 types of insect can depend on one tree species. If the tree dies out, so do all the insects.

So far, 22 countries have signed up to the WWF 2000 forest protection plan, including Canada, Brazil and China.



Ley's Whitebeam, the rarest British tree, has been reduced by sheep grazing to just 15 specimens on two cliffs in the Brecon Beacons, Powys. PHOTOGRAPHS (ABOVE AND RIGHT): JEFF MORGAN



Ray Woods, of the Countryside Council for Wales, inspects a Ley's Whitebeam

Clear cut cases

□ China: *Carpinus putoensis* — Only one remains after deforestation. A single evergreen tree grows on a mountainside in what was once forest. It now has a fence around it for protection.

□ Mauritius: *Diospyros angulata* — One female, and almost certainly one male tree remain after logging of forest. The female fruited for the first time in five years in 1996 and 1997, which means there must be a male somewhere in the forest.

□ Kenya/Tanzania: *Holmskioldia pinnata* — The last specimen in Kenya was cut down in the 1980s after ex-

tensive deforestation. Only one is known to survive in a remnant of forest in Tanzania.

□ French Guyana: *Eschweilera piresii* *Viridipetala* — Only two remain after logging in lowland moist forest.

□ India: *Ilex Kasiana* — Three trees. Endemic to the Khasi Hills evergreen forest, most of which has been cut down.

□ Texas, USA: *Quercus X tar-difolia* — Five trees, a hybrid of two other species, remain in dry mountain woodland in the Chisos Mountains. One of the parent types is absent. The cause of their de-

cline is development in the area.

□ Madagascar: *Voanioala gwaruif* — Ten trees are known in the wild on the Masoala Peninsula. Only stopping deforestation can save this tree.

□ Mexico: *Picea matronei* — 16 trees remain. Used for timber. Causes of decline are fires and logging.

□ United Kingdom: Ley's Whitebeam, *Sorbus Leyana* — 15 trees remaining. Cause of loss is quarrying.

□ Uganda: *Diospyros kate-*



Only 500 Arran Whitebeam remain. PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Gadafy to decide on trial deal

Gerard Seggan

THE seven-year diplomatic impasse over the Lockerbie bombing may finally be broken on Wednesday when Colonel Gadhafi is expected to reply to Robin Cook's proposals for a trial under Scots law in the Hague.

Although there has been no official response from Tripoli, Libyan state television said yesterday that a panel of government ministers, led by the Foreign Secretary and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, are examining the plan and a response would be given on Wednesday.

Meanwhile a draft resolution at the United Nations said the Security Council would agree to suspend sanctions as soon as the two Libyans arrive in the Netherlands for trial. But the US-British-sponsored draft added that Libya must satisfy the French judicial inquiry into the bombing of another flight, UTA 772 — which exploded over the Niger desert en route from Brazzaville to Paris in 1989 — before the sanctions are suspended.

The Libyan leader came under increasing pressure yesterday when his allies in the Arab world said the proposals put forward by the Foreign Secretary and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to try the bombing suspects in the Hague under temporary Scottish jurisdiction was in line with ideas previously accepted by the Libyans.

Ibrahim Legwell, the Tripoli-based legal counsel for the bombing suspects, said he was examining the Anglo-American proposal "carefully". Alastair Duff, the Scots defence counsel for Al-Amr Khalifa Fhimah and Abdel Baset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi, said he had discussed the proposals

with Dr Legwell and "the plan was certainly not being rejected".

The Anglo-American plan to hold the trial on neutral territory was designed to make it more difficult for Colonel Gadhafi to refuse to extradite the bombing suspects.

Colonel Gadhafi is known to favour a trial involving an international panel of judges — rather than the three Scots judges offered by Mr Cook and Ms Albright — but the prospect of an end to extensive international sanctions and the threat, if he refuses, of more to come may be sufficient to persuade him to extradite the suspects.

Labour MP Tam Dalyell, a tenacious campaigner for the Lockerbie families, said the plan was a step forward, but he was concerned by the trial format proposed by the US and Britain and their insistence that it was the only one acceptable.

"I'm very uneasy about the take it or leave it proposition because I am not at all sure that the Libyans, and particularly their lawyers, will react well to this," said Mr Dalyell. Menzies Campbell, foreign affairs spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, said he believed the key factor over whether Gadhafi would accept the Netherlands trial was dependent on whether it was the quickest way to remove sanctions.

The Anglo-American proposal had been passed to the Libyans via the office of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan earlier to the day. Jim Swire, leader of the Lockerbie families' support group, said he was extremely optimistic that Wednesday could forestall the beginning of the end of his long campaign.

Trident activists 'breach' barriers

MoD denies protesters swam loch to within yards of a Faslane submarine. John Vidal reports

TWO anti-nuclear protesters claim that twice in a week they have breached Britain's nuclear defences to get within yards of a Trident submarine at the Faslane naval base near Glasgow.

Armed with hammers and intending to damage or occupy the nuclear submarine, the protesters, led by Krista and Katri Silven, together with Rick Springer, an American, aged 47, swam for 90 minutes across a loch and through a floating barrier

around the submarine. They say they were within 10 to 20 yards of the nuclear arsenal before the alarm was raised.

A few days later, Krista and Katri swam back through the defences reaching a dock warehouse where the submarines are repaired. They say they could "easily" have boarded the submarine had they had sub-aqua equipment or been trying to evade the authorities.

"It was so easy. It took almost no planning. We just started swimming. I was able to swim past

two security boats and cruise through the barrier, right up alongside Trident," said Rick Springer. "Security at Faslane is an illusion. They are highly susceptible to acts of terrorism. Thank god we're not violent."

The Ministry of Defence and the local police are embarrassed, having been warned in advance by the peace activists that they intended to damage the nuclear base's installations and property. The navy is reported to have spent an extra £1 million increasing security at the base to fend off repeated actions by more than 100 protesters camped nearby.

The Government, however, says there was no formal breach of security. An MoD spokesman in London said:

"There has never been a breach of security. These people are making all kinds of claims. This is open criminal activity. They were picked up at the outer barrier, well away from any submarine. We have a duty to report accurately security breaches and none was recorded."

A Royal Navy spokesman at the base admitted the swimmers had been detained in a restricted area and said: "Security has had to be stepped up. These people are sadly irresponsible, a great cost to the taxpayer and a nuisance."

More than 130 Trident Ploughshares protesters have spent two weeks camped at the base for concerted direct action. They include priests, students and peace campaigners, from 12 countries. So far,

there have been 107 arrests with four people held in custody. Both women who swam to Trident had all charges against them dropped yesterday.

Trident Ploughshares yesterday filed a legal complaint at Dunbarton Sheriff's court against the Government for "preparation of crimes against humanity". They are hoping to test international law on nuclear weapons.

Responding to MoD denials that they had breached security, one of the protesters yesterday said: "We have pledged to be open, transparent and honest at all times. Why would we lie?"

The Faslane base has long been a target of protesters. A permanent peace camp is pitched outside its gates. Last

month, two activists, aged 16 and 17, broke into the base, spent an hour wandering around and claimed they boarded a hunter-killer submarine from where they telephoned security personnel.

In another security incident, two women, including Angie Zeller, who was acquitted last year of damaging a Hawk jet destined for Indonesia from a BAe factory in Lancashire, stole a boat from the Faslane high security area and took it to the nearby Cullisport base where Britain's nuclear weapons are stored.

In the past two weeks protesters have broken into the base and played football for more than half an hour before being arrested.

Cover story, G2

Open verdict on toddler found dead near railway

AN open verdict was recorded yesterday on the three-year-old Louis Wedge who was found dead on a railway line after going missing from his home in South Yorkshire.

Louis was found after a police search by helicopter, under a railway bridge near Staunton, three miles from his home in South Yorkshire. He had gone for a walk with a 13-year-old girl who had been learning difficulties, and another three-year-old boy.

Stanley Hooper, coroner for Doncaster, said it was unlikely Louis had died accidentally, but a killing could not be proved. He said the 13-year-old girl and the three-year-old boy could not be prosecuted due to their age and limited understanding of the incident. "It seems likely

Louis died unlawfully, but I am not satisfied this can be proved," he said. Pauline Richards, a constable with South Yorkshire police, told the inquest in Doncaster that she had spoken to the mother of Louis, who said the girl told her that Louis and Child B had argued. PC Richards said: "She said Child B hit Louis to the face and Louis fell over. B then got on his back and held him under water. Child A tried to get Louis to stand, but he couldn't."

In a police interview Child B refused to talk about what had happened to Louis. Detective Sergeant Kenneth Johnson said: "He was at ease until talk [about] the situation with Louis. He would then stand up and find any excuse not to talk about it."

David Jordan, the girl's special needs tutor, said he had seen the children, A and B, in the street, covered in mud, on the day Louis disappeared. When he asked where Louis was, the children said they had been playing with him and that he had been "dipped" in the water.

Mr Hooper said Louis, described as lively and pleasant, would have been very tired after walking three hours to the railway line. "It could have been an accident."

Louis's parents, Michael Wedge and Stephen Jones, did not comment at the inquest, but David Gordon, the Victim Support officer, said they had expected the open verdict and now wanted to rebuild their lives.

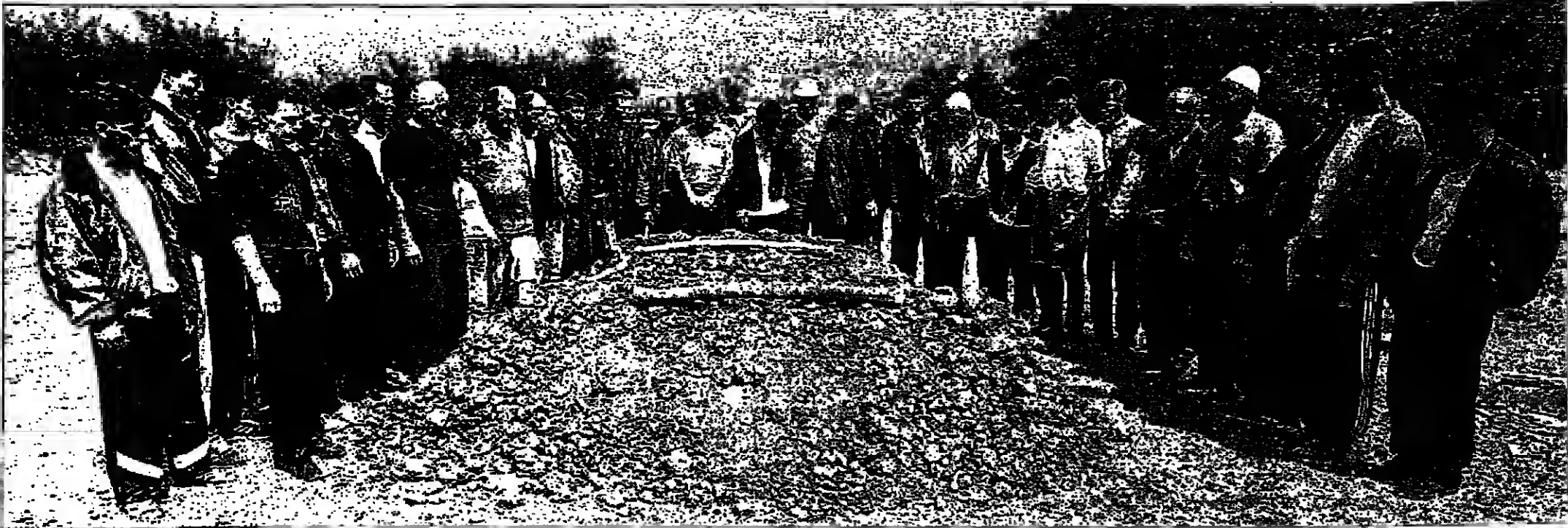
"The parents are obviously upset but hope it's now over and they can get on with their lives."

"They're satisfied that this was the best verdict they would ever get, but disappointed that there will never be a criminal prosecution."

The parents want to rebuild their lives — they've got a new home and a new child on the way shortly. "They've something to look forward to but looking back they will be living with tragedy for the rest of their lives."



Louis Wedge, aged three, went for a walk with two children



Ethnic Albanians from the village of Vlasid Drenovac in central Kosovo pay their respects at the grave of one of the three Mother Teresa society aid workers killed by Serb shelling on Monday. They died while delivering humanitarian supplies to refugees made homeless by the latest Serb offensive

PHOTOGRAPH: MILADEN ANTONOV

Serbs kill three Kosovo aid workers

Jonathan Steele

SERB forces killed three aid workers from the Mother Teresa society, the main Albanian charity in Kosovo, as they delivered humanitarian supplies near Malisevo in the central part of the province, witnesses said yesterday.

Serb artillery opened fire as the three men drove a tractor pulling a wagon filled with packages from the aid group. Doctors of the World, across a field in broad daylight on Monday, witnesses said.

The wagon, part of a convoy of six vehicles which was try-

ing to supply a group of displaced villagers, had been allowed through a Serb police checkpoint shortly before.

The Mother Teresa society has been at the front line of aid delivery as the crisis in Kosovo has developed into a man-made disaster. Its aid workers are the only helpers who regularly go off the roads to bring food, water and medical supplies to the thousands of civilians hiding in the woods from the Serbs.

The group is not affiliated to the Missionaries of Charity, Mother Teresa's India-based charity.

Because of its large network of activists, the society comes up with higher esti-

mates of the scale of the crisis than other agencies.

Zef Stafa, the society's field co-ordinator, put the number of internally displaced Albanians last week at 389,215 — roughly one-third more than the United Nations High Com-

missioner for Refugees. "The Mother Teresa people have the best figures, although people are suspicious because they are very pro-Albanian," a British aid worker said.

Serb artillery has been targeting a swath of villages on the south-west environs of Kosovo's capital, Pristina, running from the area round the airport towards Uroševac. Smoke from burning houses can be seen from Pristina.

The offensive has made several more tens of thousands of people homeless, bringing the estimated total of displaced people to more than 400,000 — almost a quarter of the entire Albanian population of the Serbian province. Three-quarters of them are women.

Many refugees are shelter-

ing in schools, sports halls and with families, putting extra strain on villages to provide food. With thousands of others living rough along rivers, water is being polluted by sewage.

The UNHCR is trying to provide plastic sheeting which can be stripped across destroyed roofs and windows for cover as the winter approaches. "We're putting together a family kit, containing children's clothing and boots, soap, salt, pots and pans, as well as blankets, needles and thread," said Neil Turner, the Save the Children Fund's emergency co-ordinator in Pristina. "We want to get the first 3,000 in by mid-

September, with a further 15,000 to 20,000 later."

The emergency has struck so fast that the smaller agencies which have only recently arrived in Kosovo cannot get to the field. The Yugoslav authorities have delayed giving licences for walkie-talkies, which means convoys are forced to travel slower.

Austria, which holds the European Union presidency, has called for a UN Security Council debate on Kosovo.

"We have to prepare humanitarian aid because thousands of refugees are in the forests today and the coming winter could cause dramatic problems," Viktor Klima, the Austrian chancellor, said.

Fears for other dissidents as man dies from torture in Serb custody

HUNDREDS of Kosovan dissidents are at risk of torture by Serbian security forces, Amnesty International said yesterday, writes Karen Coleman in Belgrade.

The London-based human rights group spoke out after the death in Serb police

custody of Rexhep Bialimi, aged 32, an ethnic Albanian human rights activist from the town of Uroševac.

He was arrested on July 6 for alleged terrorist activities. His family deny that he is a member of the Kosovo Liberation Army. Photographs of his body

show that his left arm has been burnt by something like an electric iron. His legs are black and blue, his right arm is broken and two fingers have been turned back.

"Allegations of torture and ill-treatment in custody were routine in Kosovo even before the current conflict," Amnesty said yesterday. "What is different now is that there are hundreds of detainees in police custody, all vulnerable, and the current climate is likely to lead to even greater disregard for basic human rights."

Turkish Islamist leaders face fraud charges

Chris Morris in Ankara

THE former Turkish prime minister Necmettin Erbakan and his successor as leader of the Islamist party in parliament, Recai Kutan, were charged yesterday with defrauding the government of \$2.35 million.

They and 10 others were accused of diverting one trillion lira from their Welfare party just before it was outlawed by the constitutional court in January: an accusation seen as trying to undermine the Islamist political movement before next year's general election.

A statement from the state prosecutor's office said: "The party's leadership carried out the highest fraud in the history of our republic to prevent the treasury seizing the party's funds and goods."

One of the accused, Abdulkadir Aksu MP, described the charge as ridiculous. "There's been no crime committed. Before the party was closed, the money was distributed to our local branch organisations."

Mr Erbakan led modern Turkey's first Islamist government until he was forced out of office by military pressure last year. After his Welfare party was declared illegal it was reconstituted as Virtue. Under Mr Kutan's leadership, Virtue is the largest party in parliament.

The prosecutor's indictment says one trillion lira is missing from political funds which should have gone to the treasury when Virtue was banned. It alleges that financial records were hidden, falsified and destroyed so the money could be used to launch a new Islamist campaign.

If convicted, the 12 face

prison sentences of up to three years each. The secular elite which runs Turkey would love to get them out of the way. In one fell swoop, the Islamist movement would be severely damaged in the run-up to the general election due next April.

Virtue inherited nearly all Welfare's MPs. Mr Kutan took over as party leader because his mentor, Mr Erbakan, was banned from politics for five years. It is an open secret that Mr Erbakan continues to pull the strings.

Many observers believe Virtue could win most votes in the election, a powerful argument for it being given a chance to form a government. Secular parties won nearly 80 per cent of the vote at the last ballot, but personal rivalries left them unable to form a stable coalition until the current minority government was created under the watchful eye of the armed forces.

The military and the legal bureaucracy are two of the main pillars of Turkey's strict secular system. They have been hounding the leaders of political Islam since the Welfare-led government tried to relax restrictions on the role of religion in public life.

Mr Erbakan has several lawsuits pending against him, and the leader of a new generation of Islamist politicians, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, mayor of Istanbul, is facing a jail term after being convicted of provoking hatred in a speech last year.

The Islamists say they want to reform a tired and corrupt political system. The military believe Islamic radicals pose the greatest threat to Turkey's security, and are suspicious of any attempt to use religion in political life.

Inquiry into Juppé's role at Paris town hall

THE FORMER French prime minister, Alain Juppé, was yesterday placed under formal investigation in a widening scandal over fictitious jobs at the Paris town hall that could eventually threaten Jacques Chirac, the city's mayor for 18 years before he was elected president.

Mr Juppé, prime minister for Mr Chirac's RPR party from 1995 to 1997, is the most senior politician so far to become embroiled in an inquiry

investigating allegations that up to 300 RPR activists were given non-existent positions and paid from public funds while Mr Chirac was mayor from 1977 to 1995. The niece of a former prime minister, the son of a justice minister and the wife of a provincial MP were among those employed.

The investigation of Mr Juppé is one step short of his being formally charged. He was director of the city's finances from 1983 to 1995. — *Jon Henley, Paris.*

Women trafficking on rise

CASES of criminals forcing women into prostitution in Germany have doubled in the last five years, officials said yesterday.

Although there were 1,081 cases of trafficking in women recorded nationwide last year, Bavaria's interior minister, Günter Beckstein, said

many cases were never reported.

The largest proportion of the women came from the economically depressed parts of eastern Europe: the former Soviet Union (38 per cent), followed by Poland (18 per cent), and the Czech Republic and Slovakia (12 per cent). — *AP, Munich.*



A party worker from the liberal Folkpartiet carries a placard as Sweden prepares for parliamentary elections next month. The approach of the election has made Ritt Goldstein's application for asylum particularly embarrassing to the government

PHOTOGRAPH: DAN HANSSON

US refugee puts Sweden on the spot

European laws on asylum face a severe challenge as human rights groups back an American who claims he is fleeing police brutality, writes Martin Walker

THE asylum laws of Sweden, and by implication the European Union, are being put to the test by an American who claims he is fleeing police brutality. He is supported by a range of religious and human rights groups in Sweden, including Amnesty International.

Ritt Goldstein, a former justice of the peace and local councillor in Norwalk, Connecticut, left the United States last year when he and his home were repeatedly attacked and his car brakes disconnected.

He had been campaigning for the local police force to be overseen by a civilian board.

His initial asylum request was summarily rejected by the Swedish authorities on the grounds that "the USA is an internationally recognised democracy and a state providing the rule of law".

But armed with a spate of evidence from Norwalk's former mayor, citizens and local lawyers, and from the respected Human Rights Watch group based in New York, he yesterday filed a formal appeal.

The case has attracted considerable publicity after an open letter on Mr Goldstein's behalf was published in Sweden's leading newspaper, Dagens Nyheter. It was signed by a Lutheran

bishop, Stockholm's chief rabbi, the head of the Catholic refugee organisation, Caritas, and the president of the country's main refugee support group, Farr.

It said: "Given the facts, and in the name of justice, Ritt Goldstein should be granted protection."

The Swedish government, facing a difficult election next month and, wary of an open row with the US, has said the matter should be left to the immigration authority and its appeals board.

Other European countries are taking careful note of the case because the Schengen agreement, which abolishes internal borders, means a refugee admitted to one EU state can travel freely to others.

"This case is likely to have international implications for the rights of nationals from stable Western democratic countries to seek asylum in the EU," said Nicholas Busch, a prominent Swedish human and refugee rights activist

who publishes the journal Fortress Europe. Another important precedent is at stake — the degree to which asylum should be granted to someone fleeing from non-governmental persecution.

Mr Goldstein says it was not the authorities who threatened his life but "rogue

lowering crime rates, it has also led to sharp increases in complaints against the police."

Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have published highly critical reports on police brutality in the US.

In a survey of policing in 14 American cities, Human

rights violations."

Mr Goldstein fled his home shortly after the police shot dead the son of one of his colleagues in the campaign to establish a state-wide civilian law enforcement oversight board.

His asylum application includes accounts from witnesses that the young man was shot repeatedly at close range while his car was stationary.

It also includes an affidavit from a four-times mayor of Norwalk, William Collins, saying that police trashed his house after he supported Mr Goldstein's campaign.

'This case is likely to have international implications for the rights of nationals from stable Western democratic countries'

police" using the sweeping powers granted by local politicians who demand "zero-tolerance policing".

As a result, he claims, the local police are out of control, and cites a Human Rights Watch report which says that, although zero-tolerance policing has been credited with

Rights Watch concluded: "Police brutality is persistent in all these cities; systems to deal with abuse have had similar failings in all cities; and in each city examined, complainants face enormous barriers in seeking administrative punishment or criminal prosecution of officers who

Abu Nidal 'dying in Egyptian custody'

Julian Borger in Jerusalem

ABU NIDAL, one of the most feared terrorists of modern times, is dying of leukaemia in an Egyptian cell, Palestinian sources in Cairo and the West Bank said yesterday.

The Egyptian government has denied holding the Palestinian extremist, whose followers killed hundreds of people in a 17-year global terrorist campaign beginning in 1974. But analysts in Cairo said that, at a time of heightened terrorist activity, the authorities almost certainly feared retaliation.

A source close to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation delegation in Cairo said Abu Nidal, aged 61, was

seized by Egyptian security officers as he arrived from Libya last month under an assumed name.

"We believe he was on his way to a third country to get treatment for his leukaemia," the source said.

"It looks almost like an accident. Egyptian security have most of the Palestinians here under surveillance and they were watching members of his organisation when Abu Nidal himself showed up."

A Palestinian official in the West Bank confirmed the report. "It seems like they really have him this time, though the details are still unclear. The Egyptians aren't saying much," he said.

Egyptian newspapers carried an official denial last week, quoting a government source as describing reports of the arrest as "untrue and baseless". But yesterday's Los Angeles Times reported that Cairo had told Washington of the arrest.

This week's edition of the Egyptian magazine *Rose el-Youssef* said Abu Nidal was living his last few days. "It seems like [he] no longer has any role to play. He is forced to remain quiet, and may stay in silence until the graveyard. It will not be long before the full truth is known."

Abu Nidal was born Sabri al-Banna into a wealthy Arab family in Jaffa, but has been a refugee since the establishment of Israel in 1948, when he was aged 11. He left Yasser Arafat's PLO in 1974, accusing it of betraying the struggle against Israel.

Under the patronage of Iraq, then Syria, and finally Libya, he sent assassins around the world to strike at Israeli, Western and PLO targets. His leftwing faction, known as Fatah-Revolutionary Council, or the Abu Nidal Organisation, opened fire on passengers in a double massacre at Vienna and Rome airports in December 1985.

It also attacked synagogues and Jewish schools around the world, at the same time pursuing an equally global vendetta against the PLO, assassinating its delegates in London, Kuwait, Paris, Brussels, Lisbon and Tunis.

The group's debilitating war against the PLO led to frequent Arab claims that it was secretly sponsored by the Israeli secret service, Mossad. Its last known attack was the assassination of Mr Arafat's deputy, Abu Iyad, and a senior Palestinian commander, Abu el-Hol, in January 1991 by members who had infiltrated the PLO's bodyguard corps in Tunis.

The organisation is no longer considered a potent threat, having broken apart in recent years in a series of internal feuds as its leader became a recluse in his Libyan haven. Two of Abu Nidal's nephews were shot in Beirut last October, soon after leaving the organisation.

Patrick Seale, Abu Nidal's biographer, said last night that he may have walked into a trap set by Egyptian intelligence. "He was thought to have done a deal with the Egyptians, who said they'd look after him because Gaddafi wanted him out of Libya."

"It may be the Egyptians want to question him and then trade him with other intelligence organisations. But he may be too ill to talk."

Bloody legacy



Abu Nidal, pictured in a rare photograph, has been linked to these attacks:

- JANUARY 1978: Killing of Said Hammami, PLO representative in London.
- JUNE 1978: Iz al-Din al-Kalaki, PLO representative in Paris, killed.
- JUNE 1981: Assassination of Naim Khader, the PLO representative in Brussels.
- JUNE 1982: Attempted assassination of Israel's ambassador to London, Shlomo Argov. Provokes Israeli invasion of Lebanon.
- OCTOBER 1983: The assassination of Jordanian ambassadors in New Delhi and Rome.
- DECEMBER 1983: Jordan's ambassador in Madrid killed.
- FEBRUARY 1984: UAE ambassador in Paris assassinated.
- MARCH 1984: British diplomat in Athens killed.
- NOVEMBER 1984: Assassination of the British High Commissioner in Bombay.
- NOVEMBER 1984: British Airways offices in Beirut bombed.
- JULY 1985: Bombing of BA offices in Madrid; one killed.
- NOVEMBER 1985: Hijacking of an Egyptian plane to Malta; 66 people killed during rescue.
- DECEMBER 1985: Attacks on Rome and Vienna airports, killing 16.
- SEPTEMBER 1986: Attack on Istanbul synagogue; 22 killed.
- MAY 1988: Attacks on Acropole Hotel and Sudan Club in Khartoum; eight killed.
- JANUARY 1991: PLO deputy Abu Iyad, and Fatah chief, Abu el-Hol, killed in Tunis.

FBI trail leads to Saudi millionaire terrorist



Bin Laden allegedly planned to kill Clinton

Gary Younge in Washington

OSAMA bin Laden, the millionaire Saudi dissident who was the target of last week's missile attacks by the United States, twice directed his followers to assassinate President Bill Clinton, it was alleged yesterday.

According to *Newsday*, the assassination was planned to take place during Mr Clinton's visit to the Philippines in November 1994, but was abandoned because of heavy security. The second plot was foiled when Mr Clinton's trip to Pakistan in February this year was cancelled.

Counter-terrorism and intelligence sources say Ramzi Yousef, who was convicted of the 1983 bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York, was due to carry out the killing in Manila.

He allegedly told FBI agents escorting him to New York for his bombing trial that he planned to kill Mr Clinton by blowing up his motorcade with a missile or explosives, but gave up because the security was too tight.

Yousef, it is reported, did not say Mr Bin Laden was behind the plot. But one of his co-defendants, Walk Khan Amin Shah, once a senior aide to Mr Bin Laden, allegedly said the order had come from the Saudi millionaire, who now lives in Afghanistan.

Officials in the Clinton administration were due to reveal the Manila plot last Thursday, when they announced cruise missile attacks on Mr Bin Laden's bases in Afghanistan and a suspected chemical weapons factory in Sudan. They changed their minds because they did not wish to convey the impression that Mr Clinton had authorised the strikes for personal reasons.

Evidence of the second assassination plot is alleged to have come from Mohammed Sadiq Odeh, the man believed to have constructed the bomb that destroyed the US embassy in Nairobi.

"Bin Laden organised the formation of a group to plan Clinton's assassination," said an FBI insider. "But the plan was cancelled because the trip was cancelled."

Meanwhile efforts by the US to negotiate with the Taliban, the Islamic regime that controls most of Afghanistan, to hand over Mr Bin Laden in return for diplomatic recognition or aid have been rebuffed.

The Taliban's leader, Mohammed Omar, has told the US there is nothing to talk about after the air strikes which killed 21 people. "We told the Americans, 'What's left for talks now? Everything was finished after the rocket attacks'," he said in an inter-

view from his headquarters in Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan.

An official at the US embassy in Afghanistan, Richard Hoagland, confirmed that the US had tried to reopen dialogue with the Taliban which controls 90 per cent of the country.

"We are of course interested in talking to the Taliban about Bin Laden and other international terrorist threats," he said.

As part of this dialogue the United States has urged the Taliban to honour international-recognised norms on human rights, narcotics

'We will never hand Osama over to anyone. We will protect him with our life'

and terrorism, including the need to restrain Mr Bin Laden from using Afghanistan to plan, organise or launch terrorist attacks.

Mullah Omar has repudiated Mr Bin Laden for living his anti-American rhetoric from within Afghanistan but has resolutely refused to abandon his friar ally and the source of a great deal of Taliban funds.

"We will never hand Osama over to anyone," he said. "I will protect him with our life."

He also called on the Islamic Press news agency to either provide proof of terrorist activity in Afghanistan and Sudan or pay compensation and apologise for its missile attacks.

"It would be a matter of great embarrassment to our agency if America was unable to prove internationally that Osama Bin Laden was involved in bombings of US bases in east Africa and the pharmaceutical factory in Sudan was making chemical weapons," he told the Islamic Press news agency.

Journalists who visited the site of the bombed Shifa factory in north-east Khartoum say they saw no sign of manufacturing of chemical weapons.

US investigators say they have soil samples from the factory which contain traces of a chemical used in deadly VX gas.

Mullah Omar also ridiculed Clinton for his affair with Monica Lewinsky. "Our Islamic law the punishment [for adultery] is stoning to death," he said. "But bin Laden and I do know what punishment this is for this person, but I won't say it is an extremely shameful and an embarrassing scandal."

In June a grand jury in New York indicted Mr Bin Laden for terrorism against the US. The indictment would give US authorities the right to capture and bring him to the US to stand trial, although it is not clear last night precisely what alleged crimes the indictment covered.

Soil from Sudanese plant 'indicates VX ingredients'

SCIENTISTS at the Sudanese pharmaceuticals plant hit by American missiles secretly worked with Iraqi counterparts on chemical weapons projects, according to US intelligence claims. The claims are disputed by employees of the plant (right), who say it made only medicine.

Intercepts of phone conversations between scientists at the plant in Khartoum and some top officials in Iraq's chemical weapons

programme influenced President Bill Clinton's decision to order a cruise missile strike on the plant.

A key factor in the strike was a soil sample from the plant site that showed traces of an artificial chemical that is a key ingredient in the deadly nerve agent VX, a US intelligence official said.

The chemical was named as a O-ethylmethylphosphonothioic acid, a substance better known as EMPTA. — AP.



'What's left for talks now? Everything was finished after the rocket attacks'

Bin Laden was allegedly involved in attempts to assassinate the US president during trips to the Philippines and Pakistan. But after last week's missile attacks, the Taliban are refusing to negotiate with the US about handing him over

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Comment

Diary

Simon Bowers

CONSTERNATION grips many television licence holders at proposed changes to BBC religious programming. The Daily Mail strapline puts it best: "Pretty Polly blonde is helping dumb down the God slot." A decade after she peddled off her stockings in a Pretty Polly TV commercial, "the paper reveals, 'Catrina Skepper is to host a regular interview slot on the corporate's new Sunday morning religious programme.' Unable to put our indignation into words, we rang the Diary Vicar, Rev Steve Chalke — the man who, in his own words, 'most coherently defines the zeitgeist'. (While Steve provocatively compared worship to a sex act last month on Radio 4 — a complex and often misunderstood analogy — as a GMTV presenter he knows where to draw the line between piety and prurience.) We were surprised, however, to learn that the Diary Vicar is currently holidaying in America — without, we note, consulting his Diary colleagues. Poor show, Rev. We will be commissioning a long sermon entitled "Being There at the Hour of Need" on your return.

AFTER an exhausting summer John Prescott has resigned. "BHP farewells John Prescott", reports BHP Review magazine (presumably since New Labour on it). What, asks the review, has given you the most satisfaction over the years, John? "To see that people can change their approach to important issues in substantial ways," comes the politician's answer. And if you had the power to transform one aspect of BHP's culture overnight, what would it be? "You'd make people more committed to change, and to understanding what our direction is, and more committed to the unambiguous implementation of that." (The Prescottian turn of phrase is unmistakable, isn't it?) "Committed to achieving the results the company aspires to, not just in financial results, but the broader range of results that are required for balanced outcomes." For those not entirely clear, he continues: "I guess in summary you need that commitment to ensure that a diverse group of people have developed a common purpose in pursuit of BHP's objectives." The Diary farewells you too, John. You will be sorely missed.

PARLIAMENTARY profiler Andrew Roth's latest volume to the current crop of MPs A-D is out next week, and a shameless bid to plug it, he rings to tell us of the vain and bizarre attempts of members have asked him to occlude. Many confidences betrayed by Roth, who angles out "the most scabbed of New Labour counter-MPs. She crossed through most of her profile, erasing it as "crap" and rubbish. However, she insisted on its including the act that "my husband left for another woman without any prior notice, two weeks after I was lectured." She also wanted to excise the name of her lover, TV political pundit, who she has protected the MP's name as she is a particular diary favourite. Shame on you, Roth.

TOM Freeman from Cambridge e-mails us with another contribution to the Diary's People-friendly Guide to New Labour. Mr Blair's base, "a party of One Nation Radicals", he suggests, "can be taken more or less at face value. Tone was 'yelling to convey the idea of British National Party.'" his is the first helpful response we've had. Well done, Tom.

LAUNDERERS of Wembley, we are pleased to announce, can breathe sigh of relief. After five years under the shadow of an infamous washing line that a man is at least helping place with inquiries. Police are appealed to Wembley residents to report past lefts and come forward to identify their long lost underwear. "DC Lisa Campbell," reads a misleading note captioned in the Harrow News, "is pictured displaying just some of the thousands of items of underwear which police discovered in a man's bedroom."



When is a terrorist not a terrorist? When it suits us, of course

Richard Norton-Taylor



SCEPTICS could be forgiven for treating Tony Blair's decision to recall parliament next week to rush through new anti-terrorism laws as little more than a political gesture. A show of solidarity with the victims of the Omagh outrage and with the Irish government, certainly. But essentially a question of being seen to be doing something in the wake of a terrorist atrocity in Britain's backyard.

After all, most of the measures the Irish government has said it will introduce are already enshrined in Britain's Prevention of Terrorism Act and the 1996 PTA (Additional Powers Act) which gives the police wide-ranging powers to arrest, detain, question, stop and search.

It is already an offence under the PTA to fail to disclose information likely to be of assistance in preventing an act of terrorism or in securing the arrest of a terrorist. It is also an offence to collect information which might be useful to terrorists.

The Government now wants to add to this penalty an offence whereby courts could treat silence or refusal to answer questions as corroborative evidence of police claims that the suspect belongs to an illegal organisation. In effect, the accused could be convicted on a sworn statement by a senior police officer.

The police and security services say they know the leaders of the Real IRA, responsible for the Omagh bombing

just as they knew the identity of the IRA leadership. The difficulty has been turning intelligence into hard evidence usable in court. One of the main sources of intelligence is telephone tapping — Northern Ireland is pretty well tapped. MI5 and the RUC have been pressing the Government for years to allow the product of telephone taps to be used in court — a move rejected by the Home Office on the spurious grounds that it would reveal the operational methods of the security and intelligence agencies.

Whether abandoning the normal rules of evidence in the way the Government now plans leads to any safe conviction remains to be seen. What is clear is that, encouraged by popular revulsion and demonstrations against the Real IRA, whose membership is estimated at less than 100, the Government apparently believes its proposed new law will be sustainable in court as well as welcome politically.

It certainly believes it is easier to legislate against Irish-based terrorists than the normal rules of evidence in the way the Government now plans leads to any safe conviction remains to be seen. What is clear is that, encouraged by popular revulsion and demonstrations against the Real IRA, whose membership is estimated at less than 100, the Government apparently believes its proposed new law will be sustainable in court as well as welcome politically.

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The police and security services say they know the leaders of the Real IRA, responsible for the Omagh bombing

international, as well as Irish-based, terrorism are to be tabled next week, instead of later in the autumn as planned. They were originally supposed to be announced last January — the delay reflected the Government's concern that it is entering a political and legal minefield.

The plan is to catch individuals based here who are funding, inciting, or conspiring in terrorist acts abroad. According to Lord Lloyd, the former law lord asked by the Government to draw up proposals for the new legislation, terrorism should be defined as "the use of serious violence against persons or property, or the threat to use such violence to intimidate or coerce a government, the public or any section of the public, in order to promote political, social or ideological objectives".

THE cliché, though no less true for that, that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter comes to mind. Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress, described by Thatcher as a terrorist organisation, would have been caught under such a definition. It is a recipe for cherry-picking terrorists, according to political and diplomatic pressures rather than consistency under the law.

A new law might be used against dissidents who intimidate the Saudi royal family, on whom lucrative British arms exports depend, but presumably

ably would not catch Israeli dissidents funded by the CIA or MI6 to topple Saddam Hussein. In an astonishing example of deceitful diplomacy, it has emerged that, while publicly insisting on unrestricted access for UN inspectors, the Clinton administration secretly told them to "back off".

"Maybe if more evidence of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons were found, the requisite response would be just too difficult, politically, diplomatically and militarily," commented the Washington Post, which broke the story.

It may not be long before the Libyan leader, Colonel Gaddafi, once derided as the world's most dangerous perpetrator of state terrorism but no friend of Islamic fundamentalist groups, is brought back into the Western fold. British Aerospace, which has admitted holding secret talks with an intermediary acting for Libya with an eye on juicy contracts, seems to think so.

Too often, the US and Britain have fallen into the trap of demonising, and thus glorifying, individuals — Osama bin Laden is the latest example — who are rarely, if ever, brought to book. Far better to apply the rule of good domestic and international law consistently, without fear or favour, based on hard evidence. Or even, heaven forbid, to address the causes of political or ideological violence.

Jonathan Freedland is away

Why kids have babies

Polly Toynbee



GIRLS, it seems, really, really want to have babies. The news that two Spice girls and an All Saints are pregnant sent out a tremor of alarm. Well, why not? They're rich and can have a battery of nannies apiece. The unesse is nothing to do with three independent women in their 20s but with the 14-year-olds tottering along on Spice platforms who might think babies go with the shoes. The hulging belly below the lycra boob-tube might become a must-have. Girl power looks a whole lot more scary if it translates into girl-mummy power.

The Department of Health is — or rather was — ready to go with a massive programme to attack teenage pregnancy. Four task forces have already reported and drawn up a programme with costings which was to be launched shortly. It is a package to ensure every pupil gets easy access to contraception near their school and emergency contraception in a crisis. The plan is for sex education starting in primary schools, with nurses and maybe trained sixth formers taking some of the embarrassment and difficulty out of it. For those teachers who don't feel easy talking about sex.

Tessa Jowell at the Department of Health and Estelle Morris at education now have a joint committee to push through sex education on the National Curriculum. It's the first time the education department has been willing to have any truck with this dynamite subject, which they traditionally regarded as nothing to do with teaching. So everything seemed to be in place and we were waiting for the announcement to hear how much money will be spent on all this.

But then suddenly, unexpectedly, on July 31, in one of those end-of-parliament dates that gets little attention, Tony Blair announced that his social exclusion unit will also now investigate teenage pregnancy. The Department of Health's programme has been put on hold until the social exclusion unit reports in December, and those who did the work on the task forces are somewhat affronted. Joined-up policy-making begins to look like a cats cradle, though.

Street says it will be "building on the work" already done. Was the programme too radical or was it not radical enough? We shall have to wait to find out.

Pregnancies in under-16s have continued to rise since 1994. At 9,000 a year under 16, and 94,000 among all teens, Britain has the highest rate in Europe, with the latest figures showing another 11 per cent increase. British teenagers are even more likely to get pregnant than their Dutch counterparts. There is nothing extraordinary about Holland, for they had considerably more teenage conceptions than us in the 1980s. They reduced it by a vigorous public strategy of openness and no shame with the young about sex, with easy access to well-advised confidential clinics. Critics who claim sex education encourages more sex were confounded: the average age of first having sex in Holland has gone up, not down.

ONE problem in Britain has been the valence of anti-abortion campaigning, with its pictures of thumb-sucking babies that touch young girls at their most naturally sentimental phase. As a result, only half of pregnant under-16 year-olds opt for abortions. The Government's resolve on teenage motherhood will be most fiercely tested over abortion, and the anguaries are not very good. In their first consultation document, Reducing The Rates Of Teenage Conception: Towards A National Programme, the word abortion does not appear once. While abortion is certainly second best, it's a

great deal better than birth for young girls. Will the Government dare to promote it positively in schools?

Why does Britain have such a high teenage pregnancy rate? It fell sharply during the 1970s, when clinics were opened and contraception and abortion became easier to get. But then it rose again in the 1980s, as the Tories cut clinics for the young. Two decades of Tory ambivalence and moralising about teenage sex frightened doctors, teachers, nurses and broadcasters over talking openly to the young about sex and contraception. When Aids first arrived, the British government put out mysterious ads showing icebergs, while Dutch television demonstrated how to use a condom on prime-time family television.

Also, the Tories' badly bungled false pill scare of 1995 still reverberates. Brook advisory clinics still find a third of under-16s refuse the pill and choose less safe methods because they believe it's dangerous and unnatural.

SEX is a class issue. Middle class girls are less likely to get pregnant and more likely to opt for abortions; there's a three times higher teenage conception rate in poor Lambeth than in rich Kingston. But it is not just ignorance or lack of access to clinics. Where girls have nothing to expect from life, motherhood is a fast-track to adulthood. That may be a good reason for the social exclusion unit to get involved, for this isn't just about clinics and condoms but about life expectations. The unit is now investigating employment and training for the 16-18s who were left out of welfare to work. Giving girls something better to do would



Out there in real life are the Spice Girls, all power and sex. Sex surrounds the young

The claim that over-population is a myth of Western racism is itself largely a Western invention

Human jungle

John Gray

IN 1950 the world's population was three billion. Around a year from now it will reach twice that figure. There are nearly as many human beings alive on the planet as ever lived on it up to the start of this century. Soon, for the first time in history, the ancient Greek catchword for death — "Joining the majority" — will cease to be accurate.

According to estimates issued recently by the United Nations population fund, population will stabilise about 200 years from now. Will the world then be over-populated? Is it over-populated now?

Over the past 20 years, free marketeers and development economists, Marxists and ex-Marxists, "pro-life" Christians and technological optimists have more or less removed the issue of population from the agenda of public discussion. This motley coalition has succeeded in creating the impression that anyone who thinks there can be too many people must be racist and hostile to social justice.

Yet the claim that over-population is a myth of Western racism is itself largely a Western invention. The idea that there is no such thing as over-population is rejected by much of the developing world. China, India, Egypt and Iran all have population policies.

It is because the UN has tried to help population control in developing countries that it has been attacked so savagely by the Christian right in the United States.

First World countries are among the most over-populated. The affluent societies of the West maintain themselves partly because they are beneficiaries of a continuous transfer of resources from developing countries. The average European or American consumes far more of the world's scarce resources than the average person in the Third World.

To be sure, per capita consumption could be reduced in Western countries by more environmentally friendly policies — if such policies were politically possible. But if Western countries had smaller populations that would in itself

make for a better use of the world's resources.

There is a curious meeting of minds between those who oppose population control on religious grounds and those who believe that advances in technology can support ever-larger human numbers. Neither group is much concerned with the quality of life in a densely populated world and neither attaches any intrinsic worth to the other animals.

A world without the habitats needed for tigers, great apes and many other animal species to survive

with which humans share the earth. Consider developing countries in which growth in population is declining. Where this is happening it is because women have better access to contraception and abortion. Those in Western countries who reject population control

are denying women control over their own fertility and condemning them to a miserable quality of life. At the same time they are condemning these women's children to a desperate competition for work.

The technological advances which are supposed to enable the earth to support enormous human populations have many drawbacks. The fashionable notion that genetically engineered crops can be used to rid the world of starvation is a particularly dangerous fantasy. But, quite apart from its risks to the environment, the use of new technologies in agriculture has one outstanding consequence for developing countries. It greatly reduces the need for human labour. Industrialising agriculture increases food production. But it also creates a huge over-supply of workers. The introduction of new, mechanised methods in farming is one of the chief reasons why China has well over 100 million displaced, vagrant labourers. Together with deflation in the rest of the economy, helter-skelter modernisation of China's

agriculture has made a social explosion practically unavoidable.

Even if these risks have been exaggerated, a fundamental question remains about the desirability of a densely populated world. When human numbers explode, the habitats of other animals are eroded or destroyed. A world of 11 billion humans will be a world without the environments needed for tigers, great apes and many other animal species to survive in the wild. Already diminished, rainforests which are havens for innumerable forms of plant, insect and animal life will be further shrunk. Who wants to live in such a world?

In fact, this nightmare vision of the planet choked with human beings is unlikely ever to become a reality. Classical Malthusian checks on human numbers — war, famine and pestilence — will see to that. The planet may then return to a kind of equilibrium — but one that has been achieved with minimal input from human intelligence.

John Gray is professor of European thought at the LSE

make many delay having babies.

But will the Government be brave enough to change the climate on sex and the young? Out there in real life are the Spice Girls, all power and sex. There in most schools the young find a wall of silence. Most get basic sex education, but are told nothing about where to go for local sex advice services. How is a 15-year-old who can't read a bus timetable to find out? Nervous teenagers may have only an hour between school and getting home to visit a clinic. If they find one on the right day and there's a long wait, they can't stay. Will the Government put up notices in every school advertising nearby clinics — to open on Saturdays everywhere? Will every school have a confidential nurse, offering morning-after pills in emergencies, and private advice on drugs and other secret problems? What about condoms in school lavatories? Will ministers do all they can to encourage contraception openly with parents, governors and the hostile press?

The time has passed for muddled messages about the evils of sex, for sex surrounds the young in everything they read and see and listen to. The evidence from all over the world points only one way — the more unequivocal, easy openness about sex, the fewer conceptions. And the less sex among the very young. Now, will Tony Blair go for it?

Allan Macartney

Fighting to give Scotland a voice

ALLAN Macartney, who has died of a heart attack at 57, was deputy leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP). An outward-looking, internationalist Scot, he was born in Accra, Ghana, the son of a Church of Scotland minister. The family returned to Scotland when Allan was still very young — he retained his love of Africa throughout his life — and he was educated in Elgin, first at the West End Primary School and then at Elgin Academy. He studied at the universities of Rensburg and Marburg in Germany, and later at Edinburgh and Glasgow, taking a degree in economic science from Edinburgh, and a B.Litt at Glasgow two years later.



Macartney: tireless worker

He broke off his studies to spend a year as a voluntary school teacher in eastern Nigeria in the early 1960s and when his studies were over returned to Africa. For eight years he lectured in government and administration at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. He also spoke several African languages including Sesotho, Setswana and some Igbo. On his return to Scotland in the mid-1970s, Allan became a staff tutor in political science with the Open University based in Edinburgh. He loved his time with the OU (the greatest achievement of the Wilson Labour government, he used to say). He had first joined the SNP

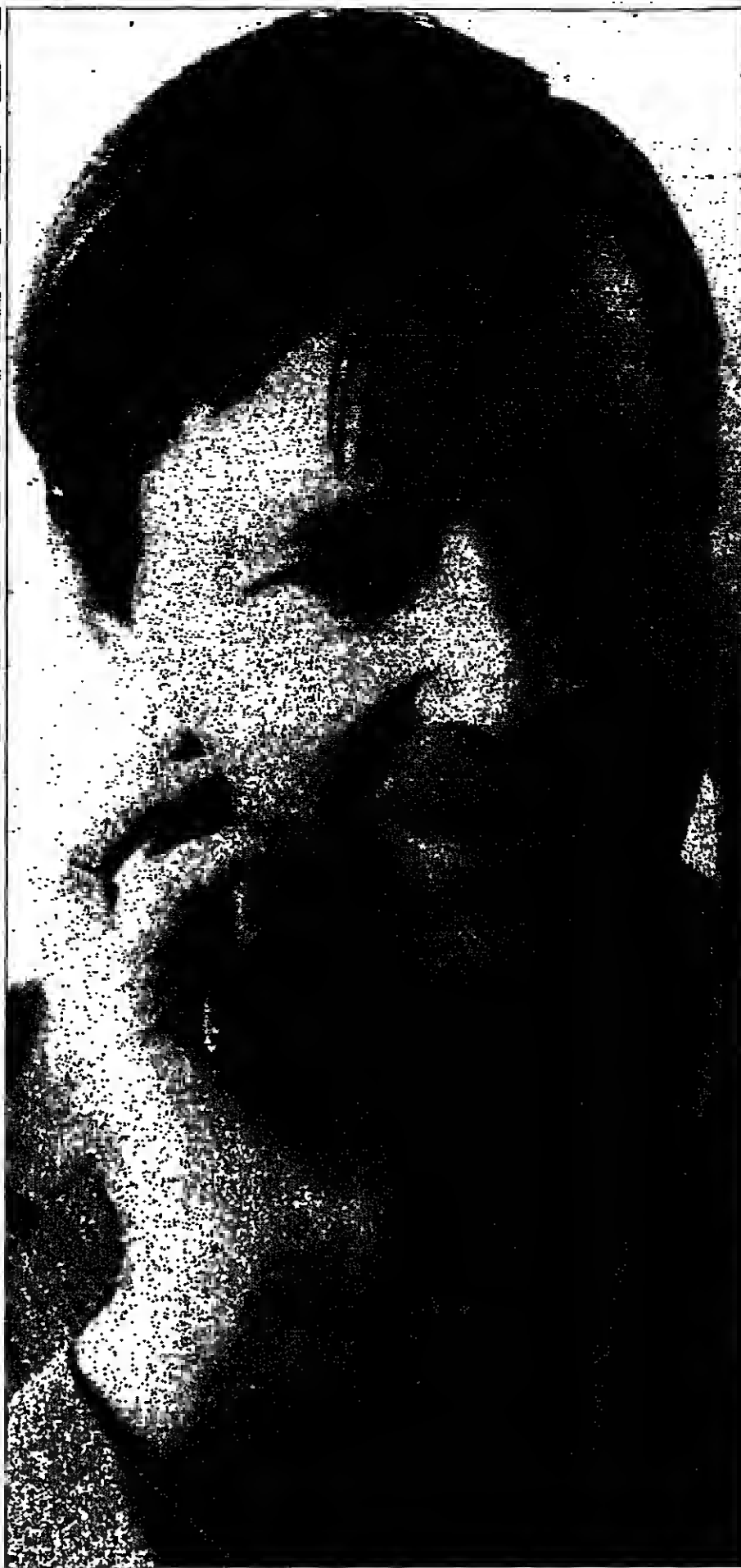
and he played a vital role in guiding and developing the party's policies and strategy. His own internationalism helped ensure the SNP increasingly became an inclusive, outward-looking party. His own commitment to Europe received a fitting endorsement when he was elected as a member of the European parliament for North-East Scotland in 1984. He launched heading into the work of the parliament, doing his best for his constituency and seeking to represent Scotland in Europe. He had just been unanimously re-elected by his constituency to stand for next year's Euro-election.

Throughout his career with the SNP, Allan was a calm, thoughtful voice at the heart of the movement for Scottish independence. He worked tirelessly to make the party a worthy vehicle for the independence cause. But for all his work for the party, for all the thought and effort he gave to it, Allan Macartney will be best remembered as a fine, decent man, a man of good humour and a helpful friend to many.

He is survived by his wife Anne, their three children and four grandchildren and by his father.

Alex Selmond

William John Allan Macartney, politician, born February 17, 1941; died August 25, 1998



Oleg Prokofiev

In the shadow of Stalin

OLEG Prokofiev, the painter, sculptor and poet who died aged 69, was the second son of the composer Sergei Prokofiev and the singer, Lina Codina, born in Paris during Prokofiev's voluntary exile from the USSR. The family moved to Moscow in 1936 when, on the eve of the Great Terror, his father was lured back by the Soviet authorities, and Oleg grew up in the shadow of Stalin.

In 1948 when his father was under attack as a "formalist" by Stalin's cultural commissar Andrei Zhdanov, his mother separated at this time from his father, was sent to a concentration camp where she spent eight years. Stalin's baleful influence pursued the composer to the grave and they died on the same day, in March 1953. Oleg used to describe his father's funeral cortege, the hearse a battered bus, passing through the streets of Moscow, completely ignored by crowds traumatised by the death of the dictator.

Oleg studied art from 1944 to 1947 at the Moscow School of Arts and later worked in the studio of the Russian painter Robert Falk, who was a great influence on his development as an artist. He then worked at the Institute of Art History in Moscow, taking a particular interest in the ancient art of India and south-east Asia, later publishing two books on the subject. (At the time, he was refused permission to travel to India, finally visiting it for the first time this year.)

Although Oleg was not an active dissident, he deeply felt the constraints on his life and work, even during the limited de-Stalinisation process introduced by Khrushchev who had a particular leaning for avant-garde art. While living in the Soviet Union, he only twice succeeded in exhibiting his paintings.

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Letters

Mike Power writes: There is precious little evidence that the former Bulgarian dictator, Todor Zhivkov (obituary August 7) was a second world war "partisan leader". Zhivkov, like so many of those second-rate, peasant politicians who came into prominence in postwar eastern Europe, rose without trace. And the Bulgarian Communist Party went into overdrive to create a war leader image for him after he took power in 1954. During Zhivkov's time in office the standing joke in Bulgaria about his war record was that he operated in a "semi-legal capacity" — meaning that he was not hiding and that no one was looking for him.

John Riley writes: Your obituary of Alfred Schnittke (August 4) was generous to the quality but not the number of the composer's works. Rather than the five symphonies cited, he completed nine and in addition to *Life With An Idiot* and *The History Of Dr Johann Faust* there is a third opera, *Gesualdo*. The quantity of his work is notable and impossible to cover in such a short piece. One might also mention that he had not several strokes in 1985 but one, though this was massive and at the time he was declared clinically dead three times. This was followed by others, culminating in a fourth in May 1994 which left him unable to speak or write.

Birthdays

Dr Raphael Balcon, cardiologist, 62, Rt Rev Alan Chesters, Bishop of Blackburn, 61; Joan Clancy, educationalist, 58; Howard Clark, golfer, 44; Michael Cockerell, television reporter, 58; Richard Dales, ambassador to Norway, 58; Geraldine Ferraro, former US vice-presidential candidate, 63; Peter Fowler, former High Commissioner to Bangladesh, 62; Sir Ian McGregor, authority on tropical medicine, 76; Tim Mahy, radio reporter, 51; The Duke of Gloucester, architect, 54; Malcolm Pyrah, show jumper, 57; Alison Steadman, actress, 52; Dennis Turner, Labour MP, 68; Dave Watts, Labour MP, 47; Steve Wright, DJ, 44.

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The Guardian

Prokofiev... although he felt to some extent the burden of a famous name, he was intensely proud of his father. A talented artist in his own right, his sculptures were inspired by such materials as Thames driftwood which he cut into rings, forming inter-linked circles and sinuous curves, using Paul Klee's principle of "line in space".



A Country Diary

STRATHNAIRN: In this strath just south of Inverness people's attitude to pine martens varies considerably, mainly based on whether they keep any small livestock. Our nearest neighbours — half a mile away — saw one in their garden and in a short while it was freely taking dog food put out to attract them. Then a second turned up and then, a few weeks back, a young one. Very attractive

animals and a pleasure to see and watch, especially when one evening one sat on the window ledge and seemed to be watching the television! Other neighbours tell a different story as they no longer keep poultry after several attacks and deaths by pine martens. The latest incident happened at the other end of the village when someone at first light saw something run past a window. In the porch

was a pine marten which ran off on being disturbed, but it was too late as there were two dead rabbits in their run with puncture marks in the back of the neck being the only signs of the attack. The third rabbit was in a hutch but the next day, while everyone was at school or work, the pine marten chewed through the chicken wire and partly ate it. The children were so upset that the rabbits will not be replaced and any advice I could give was difficult as the law protecting the pine marten is so difficult to interpret. It is unusual for them to attack during daylight but with hungry mouths to feed and with such appalling weather in the Highlands this year food must be in very short supply.

RAY COLLIER

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

A SUB-HEADING in a Homes & Gardens feature (Guardian Weekend, August 15, page 46), said, "Sir Terence Conran has hired an award-winning gardener to transform the roof of his new eatery in the City of London." This misstated the accompanying article and was incorrect. The garden to which the piece referred is at Number One Poultry in the City of London, now home to the Conran restaurant, Le Coo d'Argent. The garden was originated in the mid-1980s by the late Sir James Stirling who designed the entire building and included a garden and a restaurant as part of that design. Lord Palmbo appointed Arabella Lennox-Boyd at that time to design the garden in conjunction with Sir James Stirling. Arabella Lennox-Boyd and her team subsequently worked with the architects Michael Wilford & Partners (who took over the project when Sir James died) to create the gar-

den. Far from "hiring an award-winning gardener," Sir Terence Conran, when his restaurant took the tenancy, was presented with a *fait accompli*.

IN A COMMENT page article, August 19, August 19, we said Ronald Reagan at the end of his presidency left the US with a debt of \$2.6 billion. We were letting him off lightly. The debt was \$2.6 trillion (billion: a thousand million; trillion: a million million).

THE PROBLEM of an extra figure 3 which our e-mail system throws in when asked to convey the £ sign has struck again, remaining uncorrected and making nonsense of sums quoted in the lead article of the Saturday review, August 22. Thus, on page 2 of the section, where the article continued, £70 million appeared as £370 million, and £13 million as £213 million, and so on. Apologies to readers and

the author of the piece, Andrew Marr.

A HEADLINE on page 7 of early editions yesterday, saying Scorpion bites girl passenger, was corrected in later editions to Scorpion stings girl passenger. The accompanying brief was correct in all editions.

THE WRITER of yesterday's lead letter, (A helping hand in class, page 19), was M J Mungford (not Mungford). Apologies.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Please quote date and page number. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor by telephoning 0171 239 5559 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Surface mail to Readers' Editor, The Guardian, 119, Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER. Fax: 0171 239 5597. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

Death Notices

BOWLER, Peggy Maudslayi, aged 89. On 21st August at Kilmorie Cross Nursing Home, Edinburgh. Dear wife of the late Victor. Funeral service at Easter and Green Croft Crematorium on Tuesday 1st September at 11.00am. Family flowers only please. Donations if desired to Edinburgh and the Lytham Hospice Care Fund c/o Green and Son, Tower Street, Edinburgh EH1 1HT.

FRISER, John Raymond, 22nd August 1998, aged 68 years, beloved husband of Jean, 19 years. Funeral service at Easter and Green Croft Crematorium on Tuesday 1st September at 11.00am. Family flowers only please. Donations if desired to Edinburgh and the Lytham Hospice Care Fund c/o Green and Son, Tower Street, Edinburgh EH1 1HT.

HALLINELL, Kenneth, on August 20 1998 in hospital and of Redcliffe, Manchester aged 78 years. Husband of Betty and father of Neil, Susan and David. Burial at Mill Lane, Redcliffe, Manchester on Wednesday August 26, 11.00am. No flowers. Donations if desired, please send to Sir Peter's Funeral Directors, 11, Mill Lane, Redcliffe, Manchester M20 2TD. Enquiries 0161 721 2222.

MEDWORTH-SACHA, M.R., Johnny, 22nd August 1998, aged 34 years, beloved husband of Susan, 22 years. Funeral service at Easter and Green Croft Crematorium on Tuesday 1st September at 11.00am. Family flowers only please. Donations if desired to Edinburgh and the Lytham Hospice Care Fund c/o Green and Son, Tower Street, Edinburgh EH1 1HT.

In Memoriam

WRIGHT, In loving memory of Debra Jane, who died tragically on 24 August 1998, aged 23 years. Our dearly loved daughter and sister who will always be missed.

Births

BRENNAN, To Claira and Micky (née Bell), a beautiful son, Dominic John, born 22nd August. To place your announcement telephoning 0171 715 2339 or fax 0171 715 4707 between 9am and 5pm Mon-Fri.

مكتبة الجليل



For example, at Dorchester inmates spend a commendable 24 hours a week on purposeful activity . . . but that turned out to mean that 70 per cent of their time was spent cleaning.

Some people wondered if there might be a third way in which to establish a humane contractor, potentially reducing costs without relinquishing control to a private company. This was tried at Strangeways jail in Manchester in the early 1990s. It turned out to be a failure. In this way, the Prison Service won a competition to run it. A report by the Commons Home Affairs Committee suggested that more should follow as a means of saving money in the sector. But when studied by the Home Office the experiment turned out to be ambiguous in its results. Manchester was found to cost between 53 to 36 per cent more than similar private prisons, the prison 2 per cent less; and 12 per cent more than similar state prisons depending which yardstick was used. In the light of these findings the Home Office put the idea of internal contracting out back on their shelf "for some years to come" (7).

FINAL piece of evidence comes in a comparison between private prisons made for the Public Accounts Committee. This looked at two recently opened establishments — the troubled hi-tech Parc jail in South Wales run by Securicor and Group 4's Altcourse jail near Merseyside (8). It found that the latter was probably saving the public purse about £28 million over the course of the contract. But alongside came a catalogue of shame which included two suicides, eight riots, two deaths, taken hostage and a major failure in the prison's "keyless" technology all before the official opening. In comparison Group 4's Altcourse jail only delivered savings of about 3 per cent a year compared with state services, but had far less rioting and opening. It seems a clear demonstration of the common sense prediction about getting what you pay for.

Sources: (1) Labour Party release, *Security 2*, 1993; (2) *The Times*, May 27, 1994; (3) Gateledge, April 1997; (4) June 19, 1997, Commons written answer; (5) Guardian, June 20, 1997; (6) Prison Service Research Report No 3, December 1997; (7) Prison Service Research Report No 5, July 1998; (8) Public Accounts Committee, July 27, 1998.

Photographic Credits Thorpe. **Graphic sources** Prison Service annual reports 1993-98.

Other Credits Mandy Watson; Annabel Sheehy.

Researcher Matthew Keating. **Alan Travis** is the Guardian's home

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FinanceGuardian

Sedgwick sold to US

£1.2bn takeover may mean 1,000 job losses

Roger Cowe

RIVALRY and Consolidation in the financial services industry accounted for another British victim yesterday, when New York-based Marsh & McLennan agreed to pay £1.2 billion for Sedgwick Group, Europe's largest insurance broker.

But it will lead to about 1,000 job losses around the world in order to help make savings estimated at £100 million a year needed to justify

the generous purchase price for the British firm.

The deal will cement the US firm's position as the world's largest broker, ahead of its arch-rival, Aon.

Marsh & McLennan's offer of 22p a share, more than twice as much as Sedgwick's share price on Monday, was seen as being pitched generously to deter any counter-bid from Aon. The offer has already won the acceptance of shareholders owning 40 per cent of the company.

Rivalry between the two major American companies prompted speculation yesterday

that Aon could fight back by attempting to acquire Willis Corroon, the world's fourth largest broker.

Willis Corroon recently agreed to a takeover by the US financial operator, Kohlberg Kravis Roberts (KKR), and the £251 million deal received approval yesterday from the European Commission. But another bidder could step in to snatch Willis Corroon from KKR because shareholders have until September 7 to accept.

One analyst said: "Aon gives the impression of being extremely interested in relative size because of the power it brings. They will see today's deal as meaning that they have lost power in the marketplace."

Sax Riley, the Sedgwick chairman, said that the takeover was necessary because

the group was not big enough to compete globally, despite being number three in the world.

"Our strategic review concluded that we needed to find a partner with a strong balance sheet to build a global representation," he said.

Mr Riley added that Marsh & McLennan had been chosen as the ideal partner and the two firms had been discussing the takeover for five months.

"It is the best-kept secret since the D-day landings," he joked.

AJC (Ian) Smith, chairman and chief executive of Marsh & McLennan, said the group had not been looking actively for an acquisition but was interested in any deal which improved its competitive position. "We believe the combination of Marsh &

McLennan and Sedgwick will be beneficial for our clients, employees and shareholders," he said.

"In particular it will enable us to improve the breadth and quality of service to our clients while providing substantial operating efficiencies."

He said Sedgwick would bring strength in Europe and the Far East, as well as a strong presence in the US medium-sized company market to add to Marsh & McLennan's strong position with top US companies.

Both chairmen stressed the need to keep key staff and said they would receive "golden handouts" incentives to stay with the group for several years.

They admitted that there would be job losses but refused to quantify how many people might be made redun-

dant, saying natural wastage and slower recruitment could deal with many of the job losses.

Frank Borelli, Marsh & McLennan's chief financial officer, said he hoped to match the savings made in the company's last big acquisition, when those 1,000 jobs went — again to help save \$100 million a year.

Sedgwick has 16,000 employees, with almost 5,000 in each of the UK and the US.

Marsh & McLennan employs 21,000 people, mostly in the Americas.

The Sedgwick name will survive in the UK and other markets where its brand is stronger than its US buyer's. But consultancy arm, Sedgwick Noble Lowndes, will be incorporated in Mercer Consulting, the £1.3 billion division of Marsh & McLennan.

Notebook

Banks who made good in toy town



Alex Brummer

THE best that can be said about last night's reorganisation of \$40 billion of rouble-denominated debt is that the new Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, has bought himself some time.

There will be some satisfaction in international finance circles that the global bankers, led by Credit Suisse First Boston, faced Moscow down over the critical issue of discrimination against foreign financial institutions.

But the terms of the peace do not inspire confidence. In replacing the short-term notes — or GKO — with three- to five-year securities paying coupons of up to 30 per cent, the authorities are effectively conceding that the risk of holding roubles, even after recent falls, is enormous.

Arguably the country is storing up problems for itself, since paying coupons on this scale — even in an inflationary economy — will be a medium-term drain on public finances. It may keep the global community sweet, but shows Russia's finances are now living in a fantasy world.

Broker choice

SHAREHOLDERS in London-based insurance brokers Sedgwick will have little to complain about in the £1.3 billion offer from Marsh & McLennan. It is a cash offer, which takes them out a healthy premium in the stock market at a moment when conditions are uncertain.

For the quakers, the "risk factors" section of the Goldman document makes for some salutary reading with its warnings about potential problems everywhere from the millennium bug to increased exposure in derivatives and swaps.

The reality is that this rigorous assessment of risks is required by the SEC as a matter of law. Nevertheless, it is still worth reading.

In particular, the warning that in the case of a market downturn "our businesses could be adversely affected" may be particularly appropriate, with markets rolling from Russia, where Goldman has only limited exposure, to Latin America, as well as the western markets.

This will be the main question over the \$30 billion Goldman float. However, given its reputation and distribution, it is hard to believe — barring meltdown on Wall Street — that this is an offering that will not get away.

That appears to be vanishing this summer. A merger of Sedgwick and Marsh & McLennan knocks one competitor out of the global broking business. It is not quite clear what is going to happen to Willis Corroon, but if, for instance, it were to be bought by AON — the other big player in the business — large corporations will be faced with very limited choices when they broker their insurance.

When accounting firm KPMG sought to merge with Ernst & Young, the deal eventually was withdrawn after the competition objections began to flood in.

Similar doubts could be raised about the Marsh & McLennan-Sedgwick merger by competition authorities on both sides of the Atlantic.

Goldman risk

EVEN as this column was puzzling over the delay in the Goldman Sachs filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission — ahead of its initial public offering — the document was being registered in Washington. Those hoping for juicy revelations of the earnings and likely pay-outs to partners when the float happens will be disappointed, since this remains under wraps.

What the SEC filing does provide is an insight into how Goldman makes its extraordinary profits — which climbed 30 per cent to \$2.1 billion in the six months to the end of May 1998 — and the potential risks of flotation now.

The biggest earner for Goldman in the last full year was trading — both on its own half and that of clients — which accounted for 39 per cent of income. Investment banking came next, chipping in 36 per cent, followed by asset management, which produced 26 per cent.

It has always been recognised that Goldman's skills were in trading. But at a time of great uncertainty in financial markets when increasingly investors are looking towards the quality of earnings, the dominance of trading activity likely will be a concern for some investors.

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Belgo takes over capital notheries

Dan Atkinson

BITAIN'S infant Belgian food and beer came of age yesterday as the restaurant that started it all snapped up four of the most venerable eateries in London. The Ivy, Le Caprice and the two J Sheekys fish restaurants found themselves part of the Belgo group.

In total, these three grand names have a trading history of more than two centuries. Belgo opened for business in 1992. The Ivy was once the haunt of David Lloyd George and Noel Coward.

Belgo became popular with young people, who found it amusing to be served yeasty beer and chips by waiters dressed as monks.

Now, in a £13.14 million deal, this oddest of culinary couples has tied the knot. But Belgo was swift yesterday to reassure London's literary, political heavyweights and theatrical types that, under the new order of things, they would not have glasses of cherry-flavoured beer thrust into their hands as they arrived for a gossip lunch. The new additions to the Belgo family will be managed separately, said chief executive Andy Bassadone.

They would, he said, form part of a "group of distinctive restaurants that stands alone". Already under the Belgo umbrella are Daphne's — hang-out of Sloane rangers since 1962 — and the more modern, brash west London restaurant, The Collection.

Belgo itself boasts two branches, in Chalk Farm and Covent Garden, with two more planned this year, and is looking to open a string of Belgo Bars, with a limited menu but full range of beers.

A third clutch, with an ethnic theme, is planned around the recently-acquired Moroccan eatery, Fusha.



Suspicious-minded investors may guess that Mr Bassadone, mindful of all those empty taps bars in the early nineties, is taking out some hefty insurance against the sort of economic slump that could leave his Belgo chain similarly bereft of customers.

He denied it, and said that provided all the outlets in the group provided value for money they would continue to attract business through good times and bad.

Of Belgo's new acquisitions, The Ivy is probably the most famous. Its founding, by Abel Glandellini, is dated at 1911 or 1917, and its name is rumoured to have come from a remark to him by actress Alice Delysia: "We will always come to see you. We will cling together like Ivy."

Le Caprice, in St James's, was opened in 1948 by The Ivy's former manager, Mario Alesi. Paparazzi have been known to stake out famous diners, although the management tries to keep the press pack at bay.

The oldest of the names is J Sheeky, in St Martin's Lane, which opened in 1896 and recently launched a City branch, which has an oyster bar and pub. Temple Tavern.

Chefs bite back, page 4 G2



The Ivy, in Covent Garden, is among the Belgo's acquisitions. PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Policy deal for Nazi victims

LEADING European insurance companies last night signed an agreement to resolve the unpaid policies of victims of the Nazi Holocaust — although lawyers for survivors remain opposed to it, said a key member of the negotiation team.

The agreement — independent of pending lawsuits — was negotiated by the World Jewish Congress, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners and European insurance companies — primarily Allianz of Germany, the French company AXA, Swiss Baseler, and Der Anker of Austria.

The agreement establishes an international commission that will examine the companies' archives, set up a process to resolve claims and determine liability, said Neil Levin, vice chairman of the negotiating taskforce and superintendent of New York State Insurance Department.

"This means that moral and material restitution will finally be made," he said. Claims are expected to run into many millions of dollars. Lawyers representing thousands of Holocaust survivors said they did not support the agreement, claiming it was not legally binding and did not guarantee quick payment of policies.

"They have been waiting 50 years to resolve this, and they don't want to wait another 50," said Linda Gerstel, a Manhattan lawyer.

However, it was claimed that as part of the agreement, the companies would immediately pay money into two funds — a humanitarian fund and an equity fund — that would begin paying provable claims immediately.

"This is not charity. It belongs to survivors and their heirs," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

Stakeholder pension by union and Friends

Rupert Jones

UP to 230,000 workers will be able to join a pioneering pension scheme which could be a prototype for the Government's "stakeholder" pension scheme.

The Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union has linked up with mutual life company Friends Provident to create a low-cost scheme for people with no access to an occupational pension. It will be running within two to three months.

The scheme — effectively a group personal pension scheme on a plant scale — is designed to fit in with the Government's stakeholder

vision. Labour unveiled its idea for a new second-tier pension for part-time and low-paid workers while in opposition, and set out its objectives last year. But it has yet to put any meat on the bones. Full details are promised in the delayed Green Paper on pensions due in late autumn.

A spokesman for the AEEU, the UK's third largest union with 730,000 members, said the new scheme will offer low charges, simplicity and flexibility. The minimum contribution will be £40 a month, there are no penalties for stopping or varying contributions, and protection in case of ill-health is built in.

An annual management

charge of 0.95 per cent will be levied, which equates to a reduction in yield of 1 per cent. All costs will be met from this 1 per cent.

Pensions minister John Denham yesterday gave the go-ahead to the scheme, saying the Government would have no difficulty in supporting this type of scheme.

Friends Provident chief executive Keith Satchell described the initiative as "the shape of future pensions", while AEEU general secretary Ken Jackson said: "This sets the benchmark for 'stakeholder' pension schemes."

However, Mr Jackeaon stressed they were not in competition with occupational pension schemes, which remain the ideal vehicles for working people. Nor did they want people opting out of such schemes.

It is estimated that up to 8 million workers in the UK do not have access to an occupational pension. Some 250,000 AEEU members are in this position.

British Biotech names new chief

Roger Cowe

BITISH BIOTECH, the drug company plunged into crisis by conflict between directors, yesterday appointed a new chief executive and announced the departure of another board member.

Elliott Goldstein has been hired as chief executive from SmithKline Beecham, where he is in charge of strategic product development.

The 47-year-old Canadian will join the biotechnology company in four weeks' time, replacing its founder, Keith McCullagh, who has been forced out after disagreements on drugs development.

Mr McCullagh sacked Andrew Millar, his director of clinical research, in April for casting doubt on the prospects for two of the company's drugs. The row has also cost the jobs of Peter Lewis, the research director, and James Noble, the finance director.

The battle set off a crisis of investor confidence in the whole biotech sector and led

to an inquiry by the Commons Select Committee on science and technology. The MPs urged tighter scrutiny by the stock exchange and a greater business representation on the boards of biotech companies.

The appointment of Mr Goldstein has prompted a further departure from the board. Pam Kirkby, the commercial director, will leave at the end of next month because the new chief executive will take responsibility for commercial operations.

A spokeswoman said that Ms Kirkby's departure was not connected with the drugs development row, but reflected the company's strategy of concentrating on development and trial rather than commercial development.

Mr Goldstein joined SmithKline in 1984 from Sandoz, the Swiss company where he had worked since 1980. His experience at Sandoz included a two-year spell as a product manager, but most of his career has been spent in clinical research.

Flying Flowers shares dive on profits warning

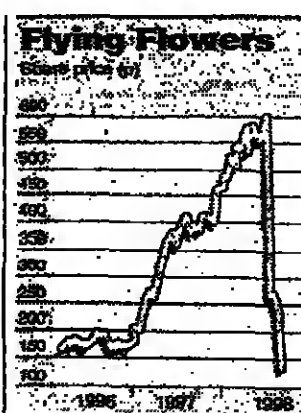
Tony May

THE falling shares of Flying Flowers headed for the dustbin yesterday after the flowers-by-post company issued its second profits warning in six weeks.

The board said profits for the year to January 1 would not be "less than £5 million" against analysts' expectations of £6.5 million and the £6.2 million made a year earlier.

Traders wiped £16 million off the market value of the Jersey plants and flowers group as the shares fell 30 per cent to a low of 157p — erasing all gains made by investors since the shares were floated in 1996. The group is worth £30 million against a peak market valuation of £141 million just nine weeks ago.

The biggest loser is Paul Fraser who sold his Stanley Gibbons stamp dealing business to the company in April for £135 million in shares. At the time the shares were



worth 512p each, but now his holding is worth little more than £4 million.

Tim Dunningham, the chief executive, said yesterday that Mr Fraser was "pissed off". After selling his company, Mr Fraser had first set off on a round-the-world trip and was away again on a 10-day cruise. Mr Dunningham had contacted him to explore ways for Mr Fraser to help

the board restore profitability. "It is in our mutual interests to see how we can work together to get the profits up and hopefully the share price will then follow," he said.

Mr Dunningham said that "with hindsight" his sale of shares worth £2.2 million just after Gibbons was acquired, along with sales by four other directors, looked like unfortunate timing. But he said that he regularly sold stocks at that time of year to help satisfy the City's demand for shares. Usually the group's shares rose soon afterwards, he said.

But this time they collapsed after Walter Goldsmith, the chairman, reported poor sales at the Gardening Direct subsidiary, which sells bedding plants by post. Mr Goldsmith admitted that his managers judged demand wrongly and wasted money buying plants from other companies to fill orders that did not materialise.

Yesterday Mr Goldsmith said that Nigel Smith, managing director of the DPA Direct subsidiary, had resigned.

مكتبة الامير

United tingling to be Poles apart

Sunderland lead the way

Sugar set to sell Spurs

Celtic favour striking first

Killie are slain

Thiruchelvam was a root against James Plaskett in

هكذا من الأصل

The Guardian Wednesday August 26 1998

Cricket

England's nasty shock is Croft's pleasant surprise

Mike Selvey fears a turning Oval pitch will suit Sri Lanka down to the ground tomorrow

ENGLISH hopes were dented yesterday when a first look at the Oval pitch for the one-off Test against Sri Lanka revealed a surface to make spinners lick their lips in anticipation before a ball is bowled tomorrow.

It was not what the England selectors had expected and their response was to draft the Glamorgan off-spinner Robert Croft into the squad and release the left-arm pace bowler Alan Mullally for title-chasing Leicestershire's crucial county match against Nottinghamshire today.

The Sri Lankans must have turned cartwheels. Croft, ignored since his defiant batting at Old Trafford helped save the third Test against South Africa, and the leg-spinner Ian Salisbury, brought in for the last two games in his place, have taken precisely no wickets in five Test between them this summer.

Against that, Sri Lanka's off-spinner Muthiah Muralitharan, who took five wickets in the defeat of England in the final of the Emirates Trophy at Lord's last week, is the world's leading wicket-taking spinner this year. According to one member of the tour management, he can "turn the ball on the M4".

"The wicket is not quite what we expected in terms of grass cover," admitted England's chairman of selectors

David Graveney after sending for Croft. "We are fully aware that wickets can play entirely different to what they look. We'll have to wait and see."

That said, it bids fair to be exactly the sort of pitch on which Saqlain Mushtaq, the Pakistan off-spinner, has taken 40 wickets in four matches for Surrey this season, a performance in tandem with Salisbury which has given them a chance of the championship.

Graveney insists he has no quibbles in backing Salisbury and Croft against Muralitharan but, as they say he would say that, Salisbury has had two dreadful games since his return to Test cricket and has admitted to nerves, while Croft has been a medium-pace shadow of the spinner seen last summer.

The temptation must have been to call up Phil Tufnell who, despite an indifferent season for Middlesex, is a horse for this party, or course. The left-arm took 11 wickets in the rousing win over Australia last season and seven in the defeat of West Indies in 1991.

All told, tomorrow could even be the beginning of the end of Alec Stewart's captaincy honeymoon. Against South Africa he broke England's 12-year drought at home by winning a major series, and yesterday he was appointed captain in all forms

of cricket until the end of the World Cup next June.

But neither he nor other key players in the forthcoming Ashes campaign will be required to take part in the International Cricket Council's limited-overs event to be staged in Bangladesh at the end of October.

Stewart's leave of absence from the Willis International Cup, a straight knock-out competition being played in Dhaka between the Test-playing nations as a means of raising revenue for under-developed cricketing countries, is a victory for Graveney, his fellow selectors and Stewart in the face of pressure from senior England and Wales Cricket Board officials who wanted them to send their strongest side.

England are due to arrive in Australia at the end of the third week in October and will play warm-up matches in Perth, which stages the second Test, Adelaide and Cairns before the first Test in Brisbane. The problem is that players not in Perth because of an overlap with the Bangladesh tournament will crucially miss the chance to gain experience of the Waca ground, a pitch on which touring sides rarely do well.

"It was always going to be a complicated situation," said Graveney. "We are supporting the tournament but our situation is unique."

A substitute England captain, probably Adam Holoake, will be announced along with all the winter touring parties on September 1.

Warne set for Ashes return

SHANE WARNE is on schedule to return from injury in time to spearhead Australia's Ashes defence against England this winter.

Shaun Graf, a spokesman for Warne's state team Victoria, said the leg-spinner could be back for the first Sheffield Shield match, on October 21.

Warne had shoulder surgery in May and there were fears he might be sidelined not only for the Ashes series starting on November 20 in Brisbane but for up to two years.

But Graf added: "We've

got another game against New South Wales in early November and that's most probably more realistic. That will still give him an opportunity to prepare himself for the first Test."

Warne is Australia's second highest wicket-taker with 318 victims in 67 Tests. He will miss the forthcoming Commonwealth Games tournament in Malaysia and Australia's tour of Pakistan, starting late next month.

Australia, due in Pakistan at the end of September, have received an assurance of safety after reports

that the players were worried about anti-foreigner sentiment there in the wake of the United States missile strike on neighbouring Afghanistan.

Majid Khan, the Pakistan Cricket Board's chief executive, said: "Firstly Pakistan is not a party to the trouble and secondly the tension will ease by the time the Australians arrive here for the three-Test series."

Australia's second Test is scheduled for Peshawar, a city near the Afghanistan border that has seen scattered violence during anti-US protests in recent days.



Northants days... Davis, a popular pro for two counties, is now paralysed

Winston Davis lies paralysed without benefit



At a West End hotel tonight one of the most glittering of all gala cricket dinners is due to take place. Tickets are 555 a head. Rory Bremner is the star turn. Thanks to airline freebies, every bowler who has taken more than 200 Test wickets is due to be there. It will be quite a night. These occasions have been known to raise £20,000.

Winston Davis will not be present. The evening is nothing to do with him anyway. It is a benefit dinner for another West Indian fast bowler, Courtney Walsh. The difference between them is that Walsh is fit and still plying his trade with brilliant success. Davis is lying paralysed in an orthopaedic hospital in Shropshire.

Winston probably does not even know the dinner is taking place. He would not be grudging Courtney, who has been good to him, anyway. He has no anger or jealousy in him whatever. The anger is all mine.

Everyone would agree that, if successful cricketers should be the recipients of charity, then Courtney Walsh — brilliant performer, chivalrous opponent, great team-man — is worth it. But they should not be getting charity: the benefit system that forces them on to it is an outrage and a disgrace. They should be paid handsomely for their exploits. Charity should be for those in need.

Davis was never a star like Walsh. His minor misfortune was that he played in the 1980s, when fast bowlers grew in the Caribbean like weeds.

Had he been English, he would have played 100 Tests. He still played 15, and was a popular and successful overseas pro for Glamorgan and Northamptonshire.

His major misfortune happened on November 1 last year. By then he was already a born-again Christian and was helping clear the ground for a new church back on his native St Vincent. He was in a tree sawing a branch, which was entangled with a higher one. The top branch fell on his neck and sent him crashing.

Winston fell only eight feet but his neck was broken and he was left a tetraplegic, the

most extreme form of paralysis.

Doctors say he will never walk again and only Winston's faith says they are wrong. He has rudimentary movement in his arms but none in his fingers — he cannot even turn the pages of his Bible — and that may never improve either. Indeed, of late he has had a setback: a back problem refuses to heal, so for now he cannot even be lifted into a wheelchair to go to the physio room.

But his mind is undamaged and his attitude is astonishing. It is ludicrous to call him brave; that does not even begin to cover it. "There's been what you might call, in fast bowling terms, reverse swing," he says. "This injury has been a blessing rather than a curse. I've met so many wonderful people, people I'd never have met if I'd carried on with my life in the old way. "My faith has never been in question. He didn't save me from illness or accident. He saved me from sin. A lot of people ask why this happened to me. Why not me? There are 250,000 people in England with disability.

"People have been generous financially, emotionally and spiritually. I've never lacked for anything."

OLD CLUBS and colleagues have done a lot, and Winston is immensely grateful. Indeed he asked me to mention the hospital's appeal for funds, not his own needs. But I want to deal with him first. Winston, his wife Patricia and his six-year-old daughter Jessica may lack for things soon. The help he has had has been piecemeal and small-scale. There have been no gala dinners.

Other patients in his ward go home at weekends. He cannot contemplate that, never mind leaving permanently, until the Davises get a specially adapted car which can take a wheelchair inside it to carry him back to Bedford. In the long run they will need a bigger house.

Anyone who wants to help him can send a cheque direct to Winston (Gladstone Ward, Orthopaedic Hospital, Oswestry SY10 7AG) or via me at The Guardian (119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3BB). But he needs a gala dinner and a golf day or two.

And it is up to Lord MacLaurin to initiate a true end to this inquiry. At present lucky players get the charity. So, when a son of the game gets unlucky, everyone is too busy to raise the money he needs. This scandal shames cricket.

Rugby Union

Welsh rebel clubs make early cup return

Paul Rees

CARDIFF, having detached themselves from the Welsh league last week, are now demanding inclusion in Wales's domestic cup competition.

Their wish has been granted and they have been told by the Welsh Rugby Union that they will be in this season's Swalec Cup along with Swansea who, like Cardiff, have decided to meet English clubs in friendlies rather than play in the Welsh Premier Division.

Meanwhile Newport and Aberavon have been confirmed as the clubs who will replace Cardiff and Swansea

in the Welsh Premier Division this season.

The WRU considered barring both Cardiff and Swansea from the Swalec Cup. The two clubs were removed from the Welsh Division because of their refusal to sign binding agreements with the WRU, thus forfeiting their place in the much-maligned Challenge Trophy.

Their invitations to compete in the European Cup were withdrawn but, as they have not been expelled from the union, they qualify for the Swalec Cup.

The WRU held a special meeting this week in which it was told that it could not legally prevent the clubs from competing in the Swalec Cup

but the pair have been told that they must enter the competition in the first round. Premier Division clubs are exempt until the fourth round.

The first round is next week, on the same day that Cardiff and Swansea start their friendlies. If clubs do not turn up for ties, they are automatically disqualified.

● The former Gloucester coach Keith Richardson is rejoining the coaching staff at Kingsholm, four years after leaving the club.

EUROPEAN CUP DRAW: Pool A: Llanelli (Wales), Leicester (Ireland), Bighley (France), Stade Français (France), Pool B: Munster (Ireland), Padova (Italy), Neath (Wales), Perpignan (France), Pool C: Toulouse (France), Stew Vale (Ireland), Ulster (Northern Ireland), Edinburgh (Scotland), Rabergh (Scotland), Pool D: Treviso (Italy), Colomiers (France), Glasgow Celtic Warriors (Scotland), Partick Thistle (Wales).

Cycling

TVM extend team deal despite Tour drug scandal

Barry Andrew

THE Dutch company TVM yesterday extended its sponsorship contract with the team involved in the Tour de France drugs scandal by a year.

A spokesman for TVM said: "We decided to extend our contract despite the inquiries by the French legal system. We are optimistic."

French police detained four TVM team officials, including the director Cees Priem and his assistant Hendrik Redant, in late July for questioning in Reims over the seizure of illegal performance-enhancing drugs from a team car in March.

Meanwhile Chris Boardman, who crashed out of the Tour on the second day with a broken wrist, is playing down his chances of winning a third 4,000 metres pursuit title at the World Track Championships which start in Bordeaux today.

Boardman, who also celebrates his 30th birthday today and an extension to his contract with the French team Crédit Agricole until the end of the year 2000, adopted the same low-key approach to the Tour de France prologue last month, only to leave the rest trailing over the streets of Dublin.

Many of his rivals felt that Boardman would not be going back to track racing if he was

not totally confident of giving his season a welcome boost.

Yet Boardman, who broke the world one-hour record on the same Bordeaux track in 1993, insisted that there was no kidology involved.

"I will be around the top eight and possibly in the first five," said the 1994 and 1996 champion, who crashed again last week in the wet when training on the road near his home on the Wirral.

"I'm not being gloomy, it's just asking a lot — particularly after last Friday's crash."

The competition has been condensed from two days to one, with the fastest four from this morning's round going forward to the semi-finals and final in the evening.

Seventh-wicket pair haul Pakistan back into game

PAKISTAN'S seventh-wicket pair of Imran Nazir and Shoaib Malik pulled the team round at Taunton yesterday after their early batsmen slumped to 89 for six on the first day of the second Under-19 Test with England.

The pair put on 187 in 39 overs to help Pakistan reach a respectable 276 all out. Imran made 90 of them, with 17 fours, while Matt Bulbeck and Paul Franks finished with three wickets apiece. Bad light ended play at 5.05pm, by which time Ian Flanagan and Robert Key had replied with an undefeated 38.

Pakistan, who won the toss and batted on a placid-looking pitch, began as if they were playing a one-day game rather than a four-day Test. Bulbeck's first three overs

cost 33 but Jamie Grove then removed the openers Imran-ul-Haq and Tofeeq Umar.

Wickets continued to fall until Imran and Shoaib came together and provided a lesson in application, both progressing steadily to their fifties before increasing the tempo.

Shoaib's 66 proved hugely valuable as, from 255 for six, the tail could muster only 20 more runs. Franks, with three for 51, and Grove, two for 44, were the pick of England's bowlers who were further hindered by the loss of Bulbeck with a back problem.

● Leicestershire, fortified by Alan Mullally's return from the England 13, hope to have their captain Chris Lewis back for the Championship match with Nottinghamshire at Workop starting today.

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- ✓ CHECK TYRE PRESSURE
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Kelly Holmes back on track, page 13

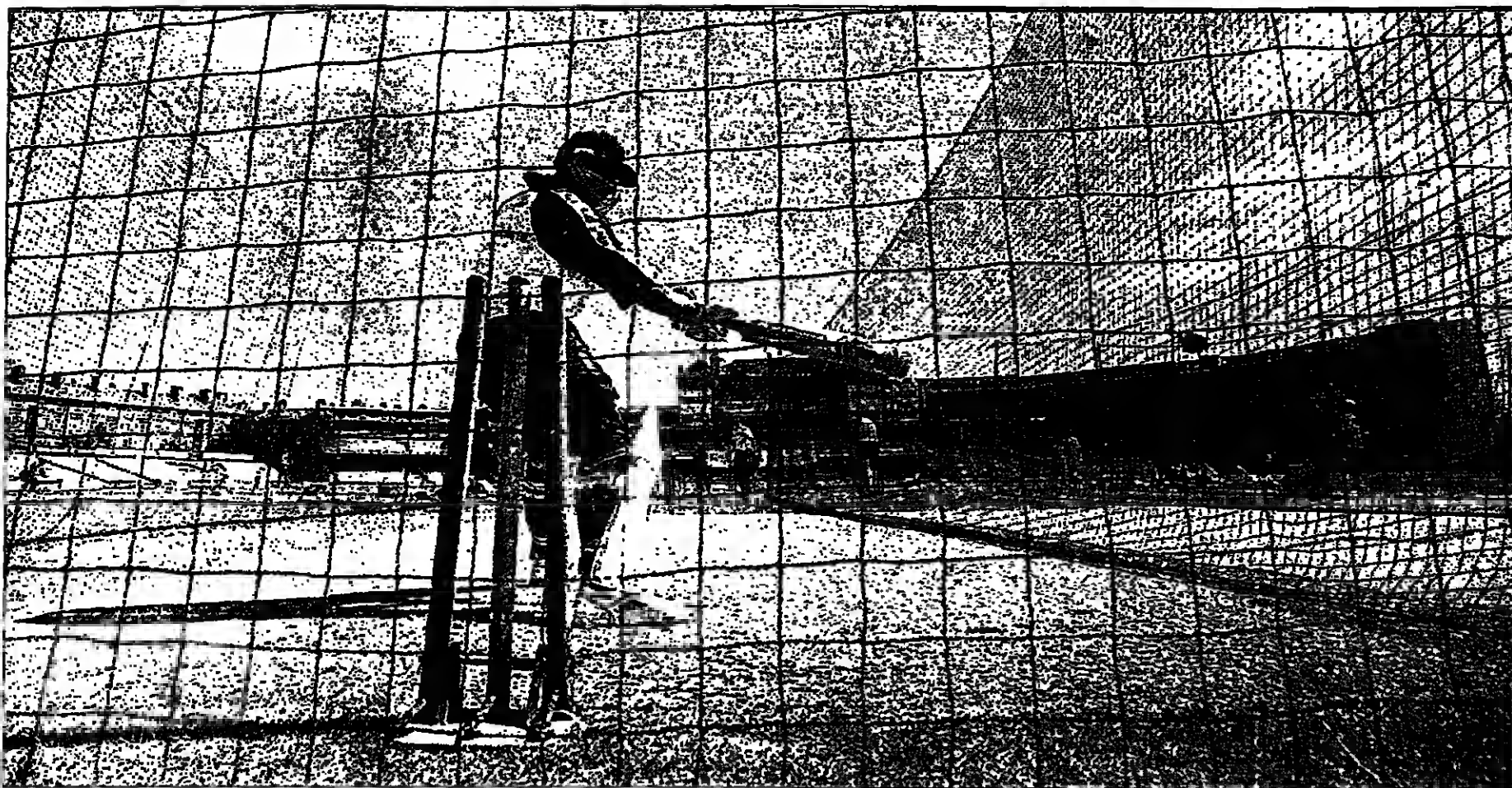
United fly in for Polish test, page 14

England call for extra spin, page 15

Welsh Cup welcome for Cardiff, page 15

SportsGuardian

England eyes on The Oval and beyond



Captain's turn... Alec Stewart in the nets yesterday before the start of the Test against Sri Lanka tomorrow. After inspecting the wicket England released Alan Mullally and called up Robert Croft. Stewart is appointed captain for the 1999 World Cup but let off the Bangladesh one-day tournament which overlaps the Ashes tour. Mike Selvey, page 27 LAURENCE GRAFFIUS

Super League bound for courts

Martin Thorpe on Uefa moves to stop dissident clubs striking out on their own

THE projected Super League seemed destined to end in the courts last night after leaders of Europe's major domestic soccer leagues dismissed the project out of hand.

"This committee rejects this private project," said Italy's Antonio Matarrese, a

Uefa vice-president. "The committee does not feel it deserves our attention."

He was speaking after Uefa's committee for professional football met in Geneva to consider proposals from Media Partners, a Milan-based company, for a new league composed of Europe's elite clubs.

The meeting was attended by Uefa's general secretary Gerhard Aigner, Peter Leaver of the Premier League and leaders of the Portuguese, Dutch, French, German, Belgian, Austrian and Spanish leagues. Aigner confirmed Uefa had plans to merge the Uefa Cup and Cup Winners' Cup as part of its plan for European football.

Media Partners had discussed with 50 leading European clubs in London on Monday.

When, at a meeting last Friday, Media Partners invited Uefa to become the regulatory body for the revolutionary £2 billion competition a settlement appeared to be on the cards. But yesterday a Uefa spokesman insisted: "Uefa have listened and taken notice of what Media Partners said but... we will not be joining them at the moment."

We have our own ideas and we will try to realise them ourselves. What the others do, for the moment at least, is not a problem for us."

Yesterday in Geneva league representatives listened to proposals for change from Aigner and decided to set up the working party to look further at the ideas.

Aigner spent last week touring Europe's major clubs putting forward his alternative proposals but it is understood they did not go far enough to satisfy many of them.

Uefa was originally understood to be offering an expanded Champions League with more money-spinning matches, more places for the top footballing nations and a bigger allocation of the television and sponsorship money to the participants.

But that still falls short of what Media Partners is offering clubs who join their competition — the ability to run it themselves and pocket almost all the money raised from the sale of television rights and sponsorship.

This would represent about £20 million for each club with up to three times that for the league winner. Currently the 24 clubs in the Champions

League receive only about £80 million between them with just £15 million for the winner.

Even if Uefa was able to bump up the Champions League income by selling television rights to pay-per-view, it is likely still to fall short of the Super League's projected figures.

Media Partners is confident that its breakaway competition is too financially attractive for many top clubs to ignore and, though it would like Uefa on board, it is understood it believes the breakaway project can operate without the European governing body.

However, if Uefa has the European leagues on its side, leading dissident clubs such as Manchester United and Arsenal will be forced to choose between staying in the fold or joining the breakaway, thus risking expulsion either from their league or Uefa.

This is where legal battle would be joined, to test the right of governing bodies to take such measures. The Premier League's legal advice is that it has every right to expel breakaway clubs should the required majority of clubs vote in favour. The dissident clubs' is to the contrary.

Beware the Long Room dinosaurs



Paul Weaver

ONE hundred years ago Albert Einstein had his application for admission to the Munich Technical Institute rejected on the grounds that "he shows no promise as a student".

This is easy to know because a chap named Karl Shaw has compiled a list of the world's least insightful people and the MTT is right up there with the worst of them, rubbing dull shoulders with Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel, who in 1938 sold all rights to a comic-strip character called Superman for \$65 each.

There is the editor of the San Francisco Examiner, who rejected the work of Rudyard Kipling, explaining: "I'm sorry but you just don't know how to use the English language."

Then there is the Harrow housemaster who predicted a bleak future for Winston Churchill. And Sam Phillips, the owner of a small recording company in Memphis, who sold his contract with a kid called Elvis Presley to RCA Records for a paltry \$35,000.

Another who makes the cut is King George III, who on July 4, 1776, the first American Independence Day, wrote in his diary: "Nothing of importance happened today." On reflection, though, George might have been better placed in a long list of insane monarchs, for the old king was as potty as Ben Gunn.

Strangely the Marylebone Cricket Club, otherwise known as the M.C.C., is known as the M.C.C. Club, a fully paid-up member of The World's Most Ridiculous Institutions and a reality rather than, as some suppose, an invention of Monty Python's Flying Circus, does not make the list.

Perhaps Mr Shaw could not decide whether the peculiarly stupid membership was particularly visionless or just barmy. Then again he made his list before the M.C.C. vote earlier this year, which resulted in the continued exclusion of women from membership.

But the myopic old buffers and duffers of M.C.C., wearing what John Arlott so memorably described as "their blood-and-pus coloured ties",

are sure to get a mention if Shaw goes for a reprint.

The club appeared to be heading for a more enlightened future with Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie installed as president and Roger Knight as secretary but in February a proposal to allow women membership was defeated because it failed to get the two-thirds majority required under house rules.

In rejecting the women the membership not only showed itself to be intolerably sexist and anachronistic but also fiscally illiterate. By turning down the women M.C.C. also waved goodbye to oodles of Lottery lolly which they needed to fund the new grandstand and media centre — whatever one says about the membership, they were over a ground of unrivalled majesty and grandeur.

They also sent potential sponsors, who have been turning their backs on cricket for some time, running for cover. Ingleby-Mackenzie, however, is neither stupid nor fiscally illiterate. And, as the man who led Hampshire to the County Championship in 1961, he is not one to be easily fobbed off.

LIKE Lord MacLaurin, the England and Wales Cricket Board chairman whose bid for two divisions was rejected by the counties, Ingleby-Mackenzie has asked for another vote. Both will win the day. As sure as eggs are eggs we will soon see women in the Lord's pavilion as well as a two-division championship.

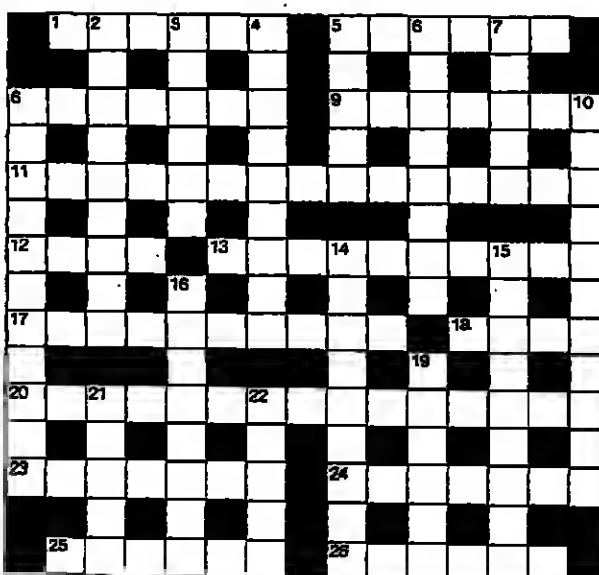
It would be nice to report that something other than cold finances motivated yesterday's decision by the 211-year-old club — whose patron, The Queen, is the only woman allowed to mooch about in the Long Room — to hold a fresh ballot on September 28. But for the die-hards of the club, rather than the minority of intelligent forward thinkers, this was not the case.

Last week we had another reminder of how far M.C.C. has to travel before it enters the contemporary world. Emirates Airlines, who had just paid a six-figure sum into the game to sponsor the one-day tournament between England, South Africa and Sri Lanka, asked permission for a photograph to be taken of the winning team, in front of the pavilion, with some of the company's promotional employees.

M.C.C. said no. "We have never allowed the pavilion to be used for advertising or promotional purposes," said a spokesman. And he was serious.

Guardian Crossword No 21,363

Set by Bunthorne

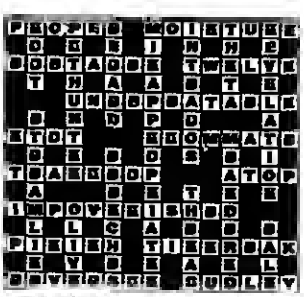


Across

- 1 Second set of principles laid down before the finish (6)
- 5 Bets first scored with Delius... (6)
- 8 ... and carrying too much weight, you say, with the Guardian... (7)
- 9 ... and our Eastern form of verse (7)
- 11 He'd be the way bats might celebrate a successful delivery (3,3,5,4)
- 12,13 Short-term interest not enough to shake the world (4,4,6)
- 17 A key from Ravel on short musical work of Joel Chandler Harris (5,5)
- 18 Amundsen's forwarding address (4)
- 20 Oh! Handouts by rulers, one gathered (8,7)

Down

- 2 Tom needs a pick-me-up: he looks like death! (9)
- 3 Women police officer's absorbed when standing for ages (9)
- 4 It stops 500 cars: bike an alternative? (4,5)
- 5 Native American with many a wife (5)
- 6 Where Ruskin went to study is not debatable (8)
- 7 English supporting 20s by the gross (6)
- 8 Not many saw Smith win; and under anaesthetic (3,2,6)
- 10 And Germany's ruler over these, with a place for Nemo (5,3,3)
- 14 Sheep bearing feathers (6)
- 15 Constant and laid back about a government reversal (8)
- 16 Punt, dappled shade, pool — miraculous! (8)
- 19 Saint among Le Mans entrants (6)
- 21 Professional twister, or twister's side (5)
- 22 Pack-leader also known as "The Spanish intruder" (5)

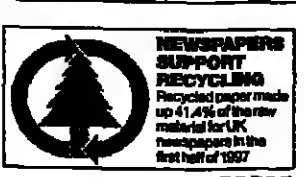


CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,362

- 1 Second set of principles laid down before the finish (6)
- 5 Bets first scored with Delius... (6)
- 8 ... and carrying too much weight, you say, with the Guardian... (7)
- 9 ... and our Eastern form of verse (7)
- 11 He'd be the way bats might celebrate a successful delivery (3,3,5,4)
- 12,13 Short-term interest not enough to shake the world (4,4,6)
- 17 A key from Ravel on short musical work of Joel Chandler Harris (5,5)
- 18 Amundsen's forwarding address (4)
- 20 Oh! Handouts by rulers, one gathered (8,7)
- 2 The last words on East Germany's European comeback... (7)
- 24 ... and come back as Scotland's own Housman, firm and continent (7)
- 25 Inside information leading to a run on the water into wine site (6)
- 26 Doctor enlisted by great river fleet (6)

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